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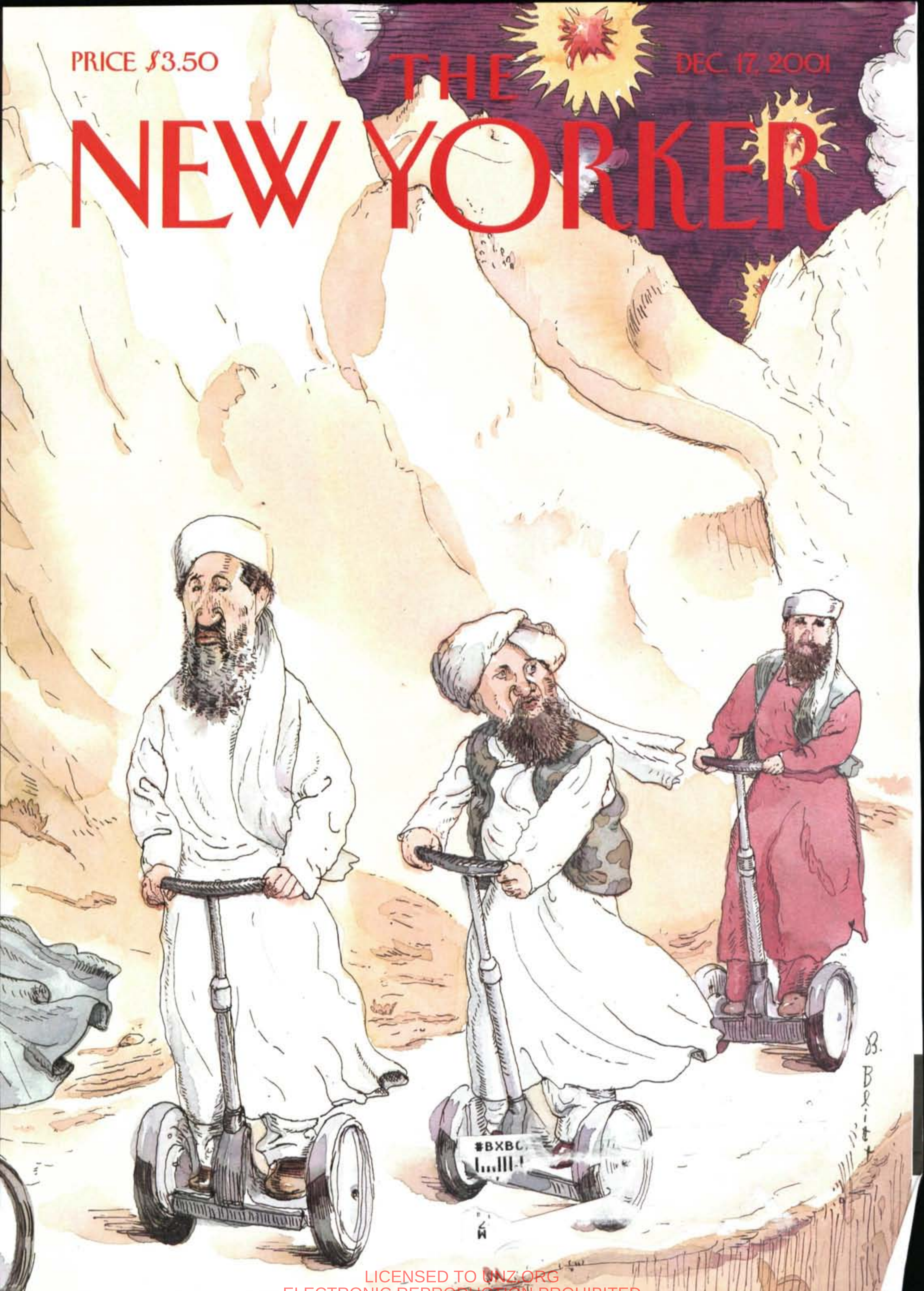
# THE NEW YORKER

DEC. 17, 2001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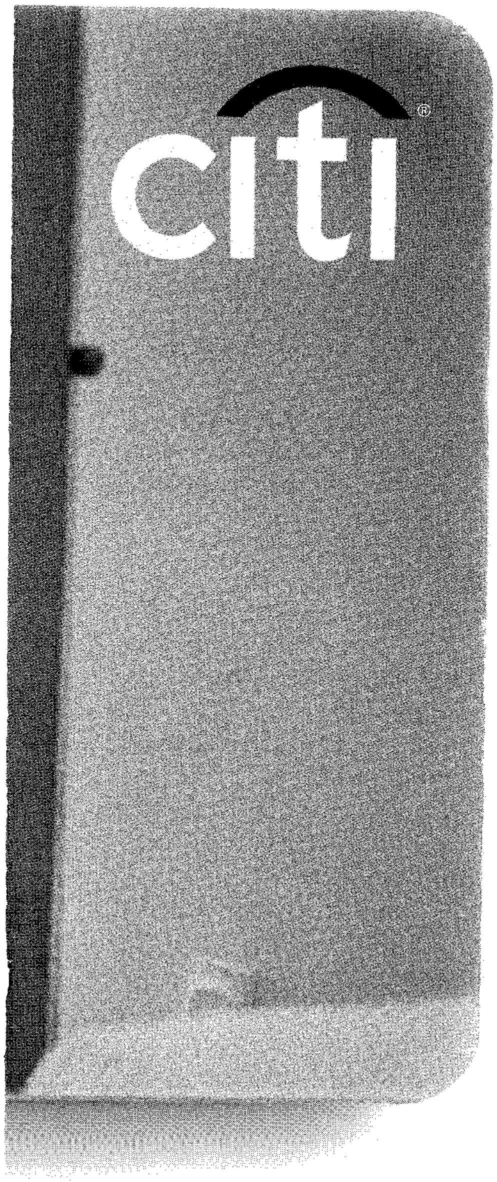

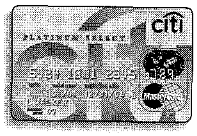
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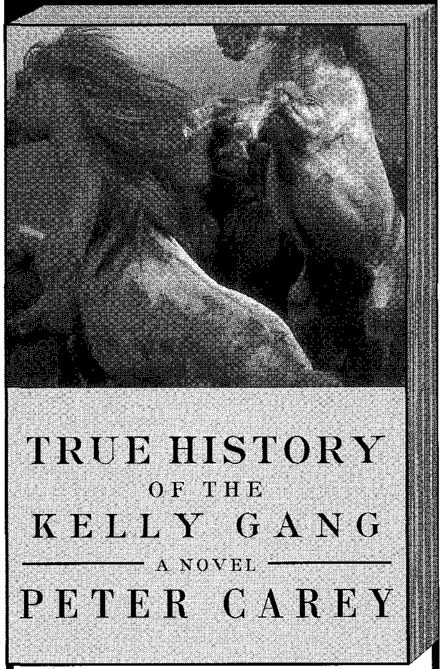

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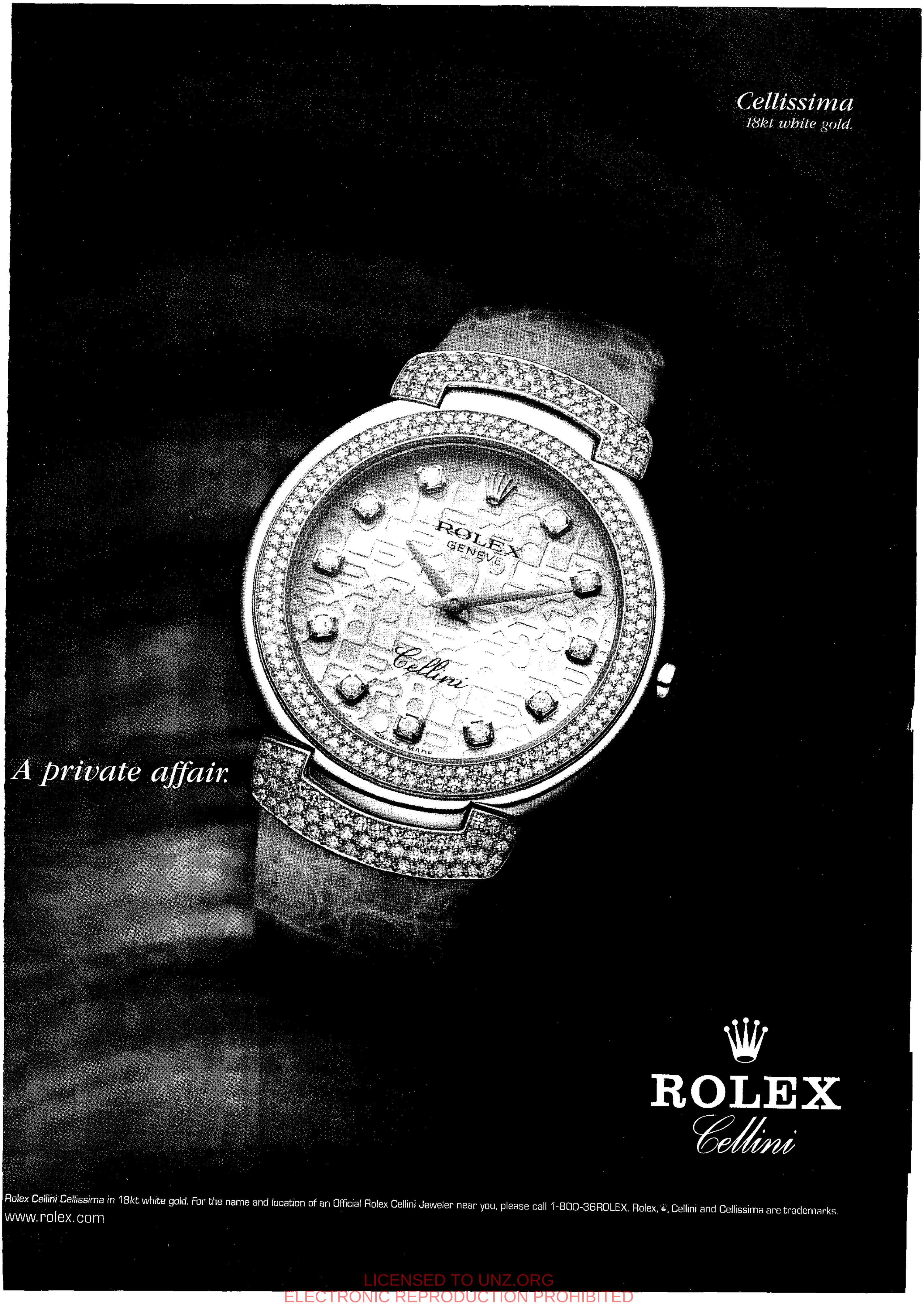
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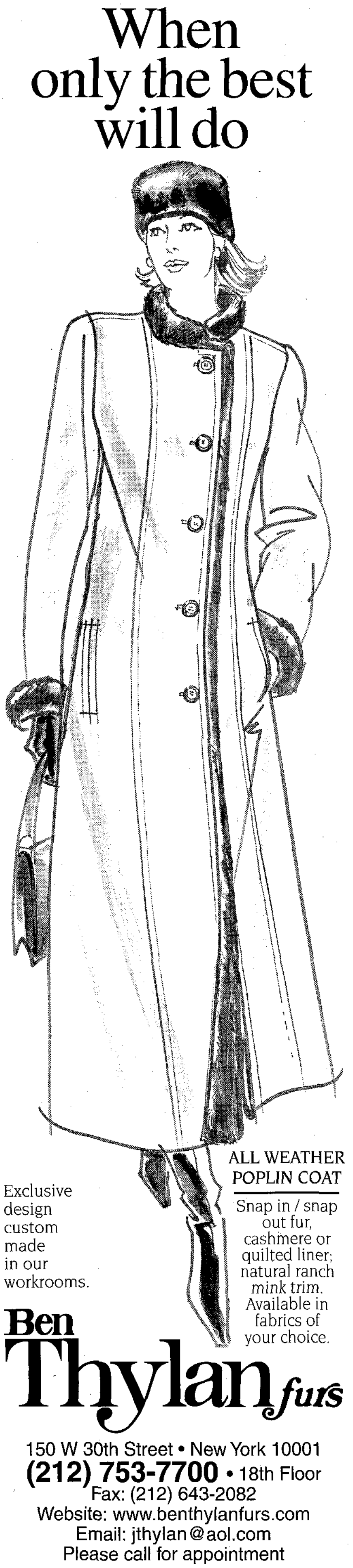

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Calvin Trillin ("Paper Baron," p. 62) is a longtime staff writer. His new book, "Tepper Isn't Going Out," a novel, will be published next month.

John Cassidy ("When Will It End?," p. 40) writes about economics and finance for the magazine. His book "Dot.Con" will be published in February.

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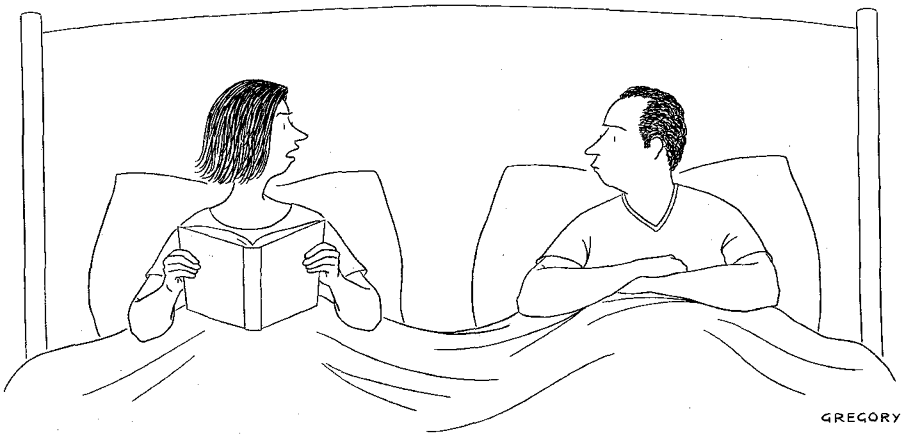
Jules Feiffer (Illustration, p. 87) has just published a new children's book, "I'm Not Bobby."

Judith Thurman (In Fashion, p. 93) is a staff writer and the author of "Secrets of the Flesh: A Life of Colette."

Joan Acocella (Dancing, p. 99) writes about literature and dance for the magazine. Her book "Willa Cather and the Politics of Criticism" comes out in paperback in January.

Barry Blitt (Cover; The Back Page, p. 102), who has contributed cover art and illustrations since 1992, is working on illustrations for several book projects. ♦



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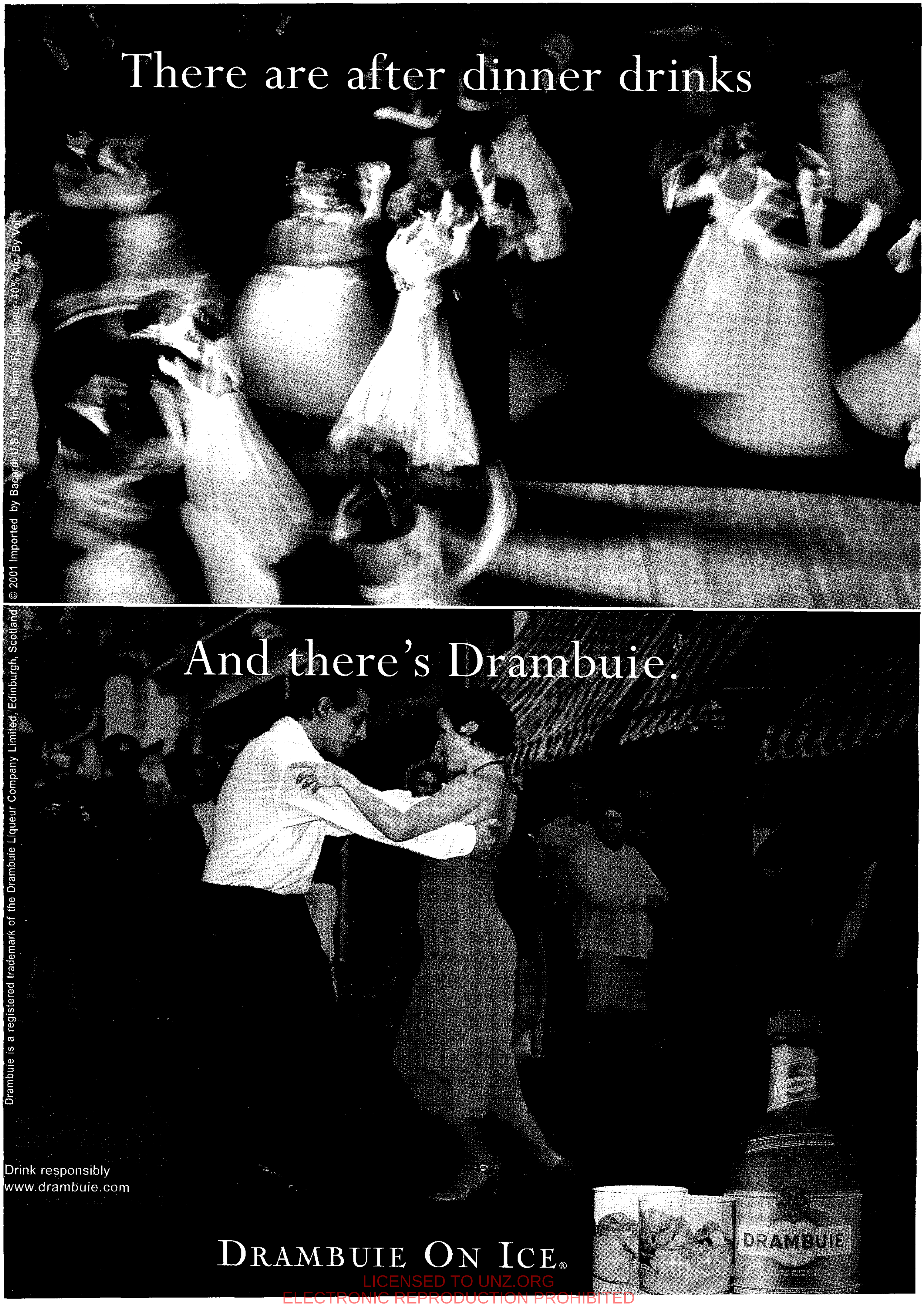
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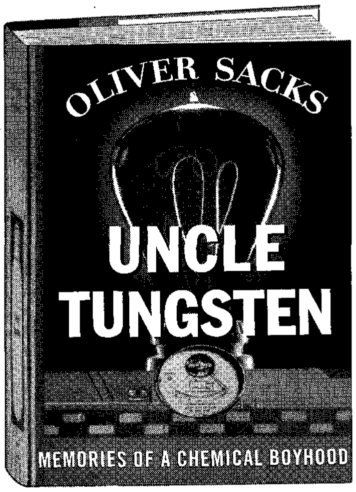

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# THE MAIL

## ONE NATION, INDIVISIBLE

I was intrigued by Mark Singer's account of the fight against requiring the Pledge of Allegiance in Madison, Wisconsin, public schools—until the end of the article, when he suggested that such a debate is an example of "self-indulgence," a "luxury" enjoyed by those distant from the continuing horror of September 11th ("I Pledge Allegiance," November 26th). Patriotism should not become a contest of who has suffered most. Near and far, Americans rushed to help victims and survivors, and continue to grieve both the people and the ideals lost that awful day. There is, however, no more appropriate way to honor them than with the open debate of our country's laws, especially those concerning the separation of church and state. If the terrorists had respected that maxim, the question of mourning might be blessedly moot. As it is, we must move beyond flag-waving to the real issues of the nation and the world.

*Elizabeth Lunt*
*Baltimore, Md.*

As the editor of the newspaper at East High School in Madison, I have talked to many students about our patriotism controversy. At first, the resolution seemed benign. But, after actually contemplating what it meant, they tended to agree that pledging allegiance to anything when you're as young as seven years old seems a little odd, even if we are in the midst of a national crisis. We're patriots in Wisconsin. We love our country. The compromise that caused so much anger—an instrumental version of the national anthem, without words—did acknowledge the law, and we still had our daily dose of America. There's nothing wrong with that.

*Paula Forbes*
*Madison, Wis.*

Here's a suggestion for the Madison school board and similar jurisdictions: Deflate the controversy over pledging allegiance to the flag by removing the phrase "under God." It has not always been there. When I went to school, in the nineteen-thirties, we were taught to recite, "to the Republic for which it stands: one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." God slipped in during the Eisenhower Administration. The pledge was introduced in the late nineteenth century, at a time when the country was struggling to overcome the divisions of the Civil War. As Singer's account of the controversy in Madison indicates, the insertion of "under God" seems only to have weakened its unifying force. Without the reference to the deity, there would be little in the pledge to object to, even in Madison.

*Bernice L. Youtz*
*Tacoma, Wash.*

If Singer had remembered that Wisconsin is the home not only of political progressives such as Robert La Follette but also of the likes of Joseph McCarthy, he might have recognized the Madison pledge debate as a microcosm of the long-standing conflict—extending far beyond the state—between those who embrace political dissent and those who find it "un-American." Instead, Singer suggests that Madisonians are out of touch for spending so much energy on a purely symbolic controversy during the war against terrorism. But, at a time when political discourse is dominated by almost menacing calls for ideological unity, it is hard to imagine an issue more timely. The Bush Administration named its dubious package of law-enforcement measures the Patriot Bill, leaving members of Congress who voted against it to be called "opponents of patriotism." It's probably not a coincidence that the single, brave opposing vote in the Senate came from Russell Feingold—another man from Wisconsin.

*David Schwartz*
*Madison, Wis.*

•

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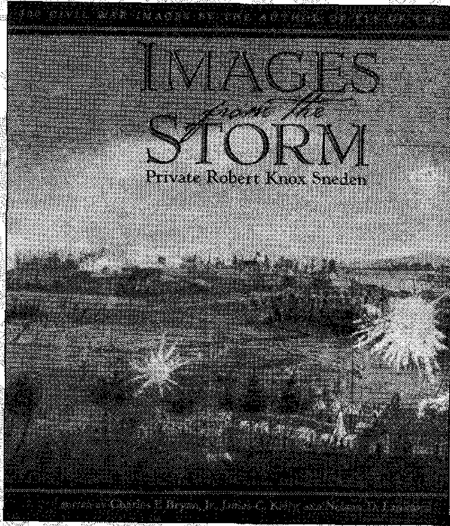
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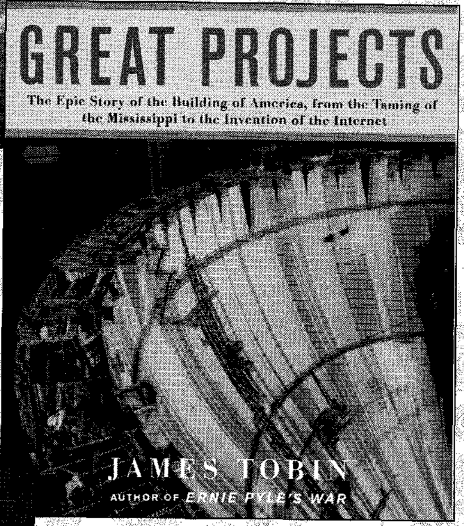
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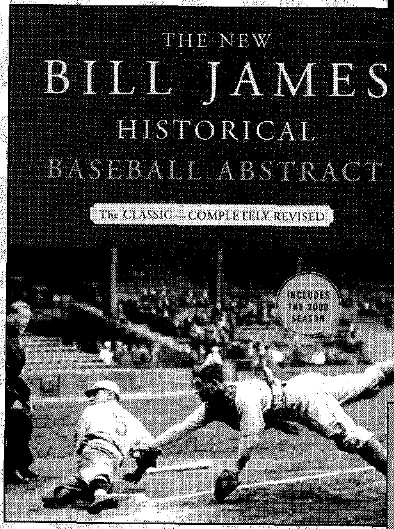
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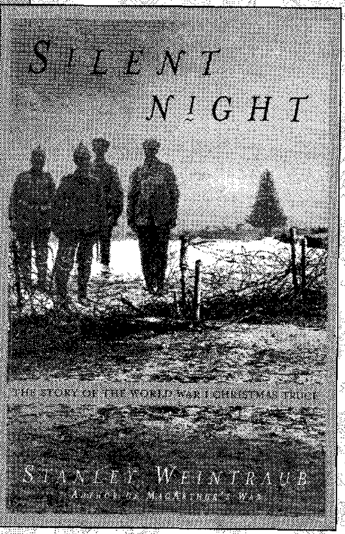
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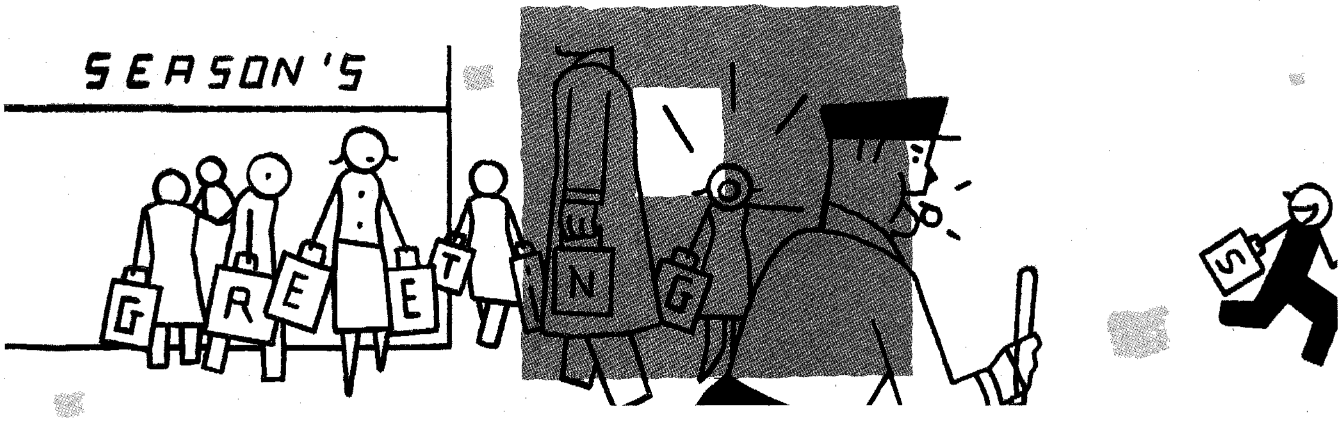

## THE THEATRE
### OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

*Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.*

**GOOD THING**
The New Group presents a drama by Jessica Goldberg, in which a young woman's attempt to recapture her past jeopardizes the lives of two couples. In previews through Dec. 15. Opens Dec. 16 at 7. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

**HOMEBODY/KABUL**
Tony Kushner's latest play, set in London and in Kabul in 1998, about a woman who becomes obsessed with Afghanistan. Declan Donnellan is the director. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200.)

**PSYCH**
In Evan Smith's new comedy, a psychology grad student who moonlights as a dominatrix is seized by paranoia. Staged by Playwrights Horizons. In previews through Dec. 14. Opens Dec. 15 at 6. (Signature Theatre, 555 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

**SUMMER OF '42**
A musical adaptation of the 1971 movie, which was based on Herman Raucher's coming-of-age novel of the same title. With a book by Hunter Foster and music and lyrics by David Kirshenbaum. Gabriel Barre is the director and choreographer. In previews through Dec. 17. Opens Dec. 18 at 6:45. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

### OPENED RECENTLY

**AND GOD CREATED GREAT WHALES**
In this encore production, the quintuple threat Rinde Eckert (writer, composer, actor, singer, dancer), looking like a demented genius harnessed to a tape recorder, plays a composer who is desperate to finish his opera, based on "Moby-Dick," before his memory gives out. The composer and his muse (Nora Cole), who wears a red whalebone corset and turns out to be a bit of a siren, act out scenes from the work, which promises to be fine and harrowing—Queequeg's song, hornpipes, Ahab's entrance. Inevitably, though, it runs adrift, as if the composer had embarked on one of Melville's grand digressions and lost the thread. (45 Bleecker Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 253-9983.)

**BY JEEVES**
There's no stopping the unrelenting bonhomie of this lame amusement by Alan Ayckbourn and Andrew Lloyd Webber, in which P. G. Wodehouse's shambolic Bertie Wooster (John Scherer) and his ingenious, haughty factotum, Jeeves (well played by Martin Jarvis), take the stage. Lloyd Webber's melodies are generic, and Ayckbourn, who, as the director, works manfully to whip a little fun into this listless tale, is less persuasive as a lyricist. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/12/01.) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

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**THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)**
Three actors perform thirty-seven plays and a hundred and fifty-four sonnets in under two hours. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

**DANCE OF DEATH**
Helen Mirren and Ian McKellen square off in Strindberg's depiction of the blasted heath of matrimony, and they do battle magnificently. Mirren, playing a former actress (if there is such a thing as a former actress), is droll and wicked, and McKellen, in his deep embrace of the role of an army captain who comes face to face with his own mortality, is a life force. Directed by Sean Mathias. (10/22/01) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

**DRUMMER WANTED**
In Richard Maxwell's latest play, a loner and percussionist ponders personal-injury law after he is hit by a car. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5933. Closes Dec. 23.)

**THE 8: REINDEER MONOLOGUES**
A brisk, funny reminder that the tradition of venerating a man who keeps tabs on your children all year long and sneaks into your house at night to visit them is more than a little odd. Adobe Theatre Company's new production of Jeff Goode's series of interlinked monologues, directed by Jeremy Dobrish, smartly skewers an assortment of political and social hypocrisies as the reindeer dish the dirt on Santa. The show is not for small children, but it's a nice jolt of fun for adults, even in a year when the sappiest Christmas traditions can seem more comforting than cloying. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 279-4200. Closes Dec. 22.)

**ELAINE STRITCH AT LIBERTY**
In her extraordinary one-woman show (co-created with *The New Yorker's* theatre critic John Lahr), the Broadway star once and for all confirms her status as a living legend as she sings songs and tells tales about the ups and downs of her long life in the theatre (her first break, as Ethel Merman's understudy in "Call Me Madam," her iconic turn in Stephen Sondheim's "Company," her struggles with booze and with love). But terrific songs, hilarious gossip, and intimate confessions aside, Stritch, with her inimitable voice and uncanny timing, ends up capturing more than a single lifetime. Instead her show is the synthesis of so much that is rich and rewarding and heartbreaking about life on the stage. George Wolfe is the director. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Dec. 30.)

**EVERETT BEEKIN**
Richard Greenberg's play enacts one family's journey from the gritty sidewalks of the Lower East Side in the nineteen-forties to the bland promised land of California in the nineties. Along the way, much is lost, and Greenberg is articulate in evoking a melancholy that goes beyond words, as he was in his masterly "Three Days of Rain" a few years ago. But this time the work doesn't cut as deep—it's a portrait of devastation done in pastels instead of oils. Directed by Evan Yionoulis. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 6.)

**45 SECONDS FROM BROADWAY**
Neil Simon is in his element in his new comedy, which is part love letter, part elegy to a Broadway that ain't what it used to be. Set in the legendary coffee shop of the Edison Hotel, in the heart of the theatre district, the play revolves around a loud, successful comedian named Mickey Fox (Lewis J. Stadlen), who is squarely based on Jackie Mason, and it's peopled by the kind of characters you might run into at the real Cafe Edison. Simon has the dynamics of the place right, but the humor here is superficial and stale—it's canned chicken soup whose expiration date has long passed. (11/26/01) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

**A GILBERT & SULLIVAN CHRISTMAS CAROL**
Gayden Wren's conceit of making a musical of Dickens's classic tale by adding songs set to familiar G. & S. melodies (with new words by Mr. Wren, who also directed) makes the old tale newly interesting—and a lot more fun. "Three little maids from school," for example, become "three little ghosts for Scrooge." The show isn't entirely successful, but Robert Charles Rhodes, as the ever-present narrator, and Barry Kaplan, as Scrooge, are particularly engaging; the large cast is in very good voice under the musical direction of Stephen O'Leary. (Jose Quintero, 534 W. 42nd St. 718-777-8486.)

**THE GUYS**
Bill Murray and Sigourney Weaver star in a workshop performance of a drama by Anne Nelson, in which a fire captain and an editor struggle to construct eulogies for firemen killed in the World Trade Center attacks. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-2407. Closes Dec. 20.)

**HEDDA GABLER**
This "Hedda," starring Kate Burton, is all surface brightness—it twinkles rather than burns. Jon Robin Baitz's colloquial adaptation of Ibsen's drama leaves little room for shading or depth, and the entire cast

LAURENT CILLUFFO

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suffers under Nicholas Martin's heavy-handed and misguided direction, as does the audience. (10/22/01) (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

**IPHIGENEIA AT AULIS**
The Pearl Theatre Company's staging of Euripides' tragedy. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes Dec. 16.)

**IRISH REPERTORY THEATRE**
Presenting "The Streets of New York," Charlotte Moore's musical adaptation of the nineteenth-century Irish playwright Dion Boucicault's drama. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

**LISTEN HOUDINI**
This new play, conceived and written by the Axis Company, dramatizes the lengthy debate carried on in 1926 by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who fervently believed in spiritualism, and Harry Houdini, a determined skeptic. The production brings to life the bygone age when *Scientific American* still pursued such subjects, but it also lays out the terms of a debate that is still going on. Thanks to a subtle performance by B. Barnhart, as a psychic, the show, directed by Randy Sharp, convincingly blurs the line between psychics as scammers and as true mystics; it also points out that the messages that psychics would carry if they could communicate with the dead wouldn't necessarily be the comforting ones most people seek. The arguments aren't new, but seeing them from Houdini's point of view—as a man used to mystifying others solely through his own efforts—brings them to fresh life. (1 Sheridan Sq. 807-9300. Closes Dec. 22.)

**LITTLE HAM**
This new musical, based on Langston Hughes's play of the same name, is a delightfully charming, old-fashioned entertainment. No weary postmodern angst, no gloomy, dissonant music—just a talented cast singing and dancing their way through a classic story in which the little guys band together, beat the Mob at their own game, and find true love. Set in 1935 in Harlem, it has the spirit of Depression-era comedies and is just as much fun. Carmen Ruby Floyd, whose voice particularly stands out; Jerry Gallagher, as a Mob tough who does no more than grunt; and Joe Wilson, Jr., as a gay couturier dreaming of Paris, turn these stereotypes into very funny, real characters. Directed by Eric Riley with a sure eye for detail, and with a terrific onstage band under the direction of David Alan Bunn. With music by Judd Woldin, lyrics by Richard Engquist and Mr. Woldin, and a book by Dan Owens. (Hudson Guild Theatre, 441 W. 26th St. 563-2565. Closes Dec. 30.)

**MAMMA MIA!**
This smorgasbord of song, the brainchild of Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, the male half of the seventies supergroup ABBA, is nothing but hokum—a chucklehead pleasure. Andersson and Ulvaeus have shrewdly allowed their platinum hits to be sent up by Catherine Johnson's book, which is simply a slick cartoon that connects the dots between the band's No. 1 singles. (11/5/01) (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.)

**MARC SALEM'S MIND GAMES, TOO**
The "mentalist and mind artist" returns to New York with more experiments in nonverbal communication. (Duke Theatre, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

**METAMORPHOSES**
Ovid said, "All things change, nothing perishes," and Mary Zimmerman's fluid and beautiful interpretation of several legends from his fifteen-book history of the world is reassuring proof. Her modern staging, which charmingly and wittily incorporates colloquial language and costumes that range across time, confirms the enduring and elemental power of myth. Here, real love, thwarted, begets love in other forms; kindness is rewarded in unexpected ways; and evil often backfires. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

**NOISES OFF**
Jeremy Sams's revival of Michael Frayn's 1982 backstage comedy, a farce within an antic farce, is blissful fun. As the dysfunctional troupe of the travelling show "Nothing On," all the members of the excellent cast shine in roles that lesser comedians would surely find daunting. Frayn's construction requires spot-on comic timing, and with the help of Sams this production delivers it—and then some. The laughs rumble through the audience from start to finish. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

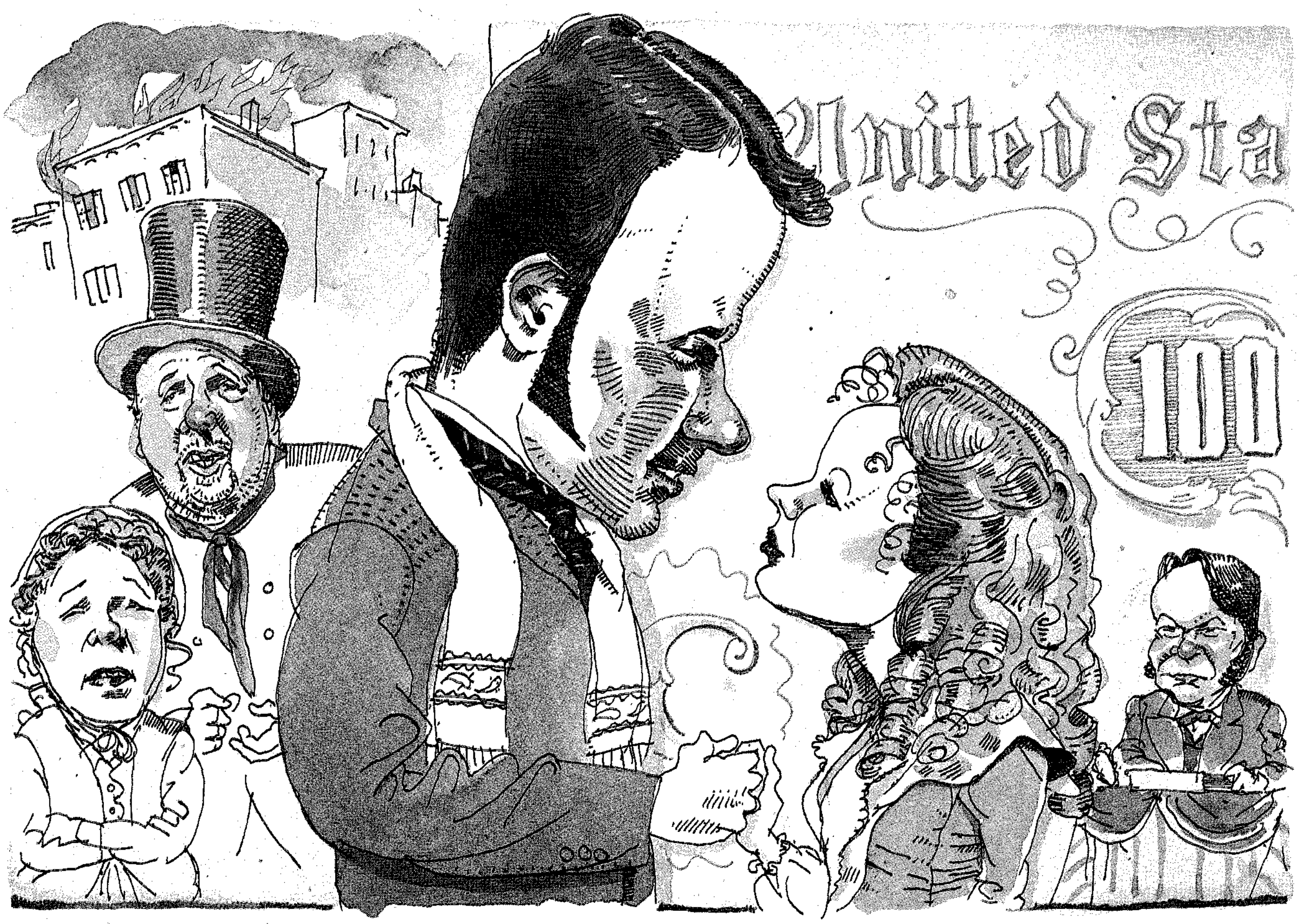
**OTHELLO**
Keith David has the title role and Liev Schreiber is Iago in the Public Theatre's staging of Shakespeare's tragedy. Doug Hughes is the director. (425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

**PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS**
It's one thing for a man to develop the ability to stretch his scrotum until it's the size of a dinner plate, but another to share this talent with the world. These two Australians, Simon Morley and David (Friendy) Friend, profess embarrassment at the success of their "little pub show," but it's still a con: fifteen minutes into their act they are utterly naked and out of ideas. They can't go on, but they do. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

**QED**
Peter Parnell's play, starring Alan Alda as the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Richard Feynman, buzzes with life. Set in 1986—the year of the Challenger explosion, whose causes Feynman helped to investigate—"QED" takes us through an afternoon and evening in Feynman's office at Caltech, where he talks about such subjects as photons, drumming, the Manhattan Project, cancer, and "South Pacific." Alda's performance is one of utter charm. Directed by Gordon Davidson. Sundays and Mondays only. (11/26/01) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 17. Reopens Feb. 17.)

**ROADSIDE**
From the York Theatre Company, Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt's new musical, set in a travelling tent show in the Old West. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

**SEXAHOLIX . . . A LOVE STORY**
John Leguizamo's new solo show. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)



*Michael Halling and Donna Kane, in Boucicault's "The Streets of New York," at the Irish Repertory Theatre.*

JOE CIARDIELLO

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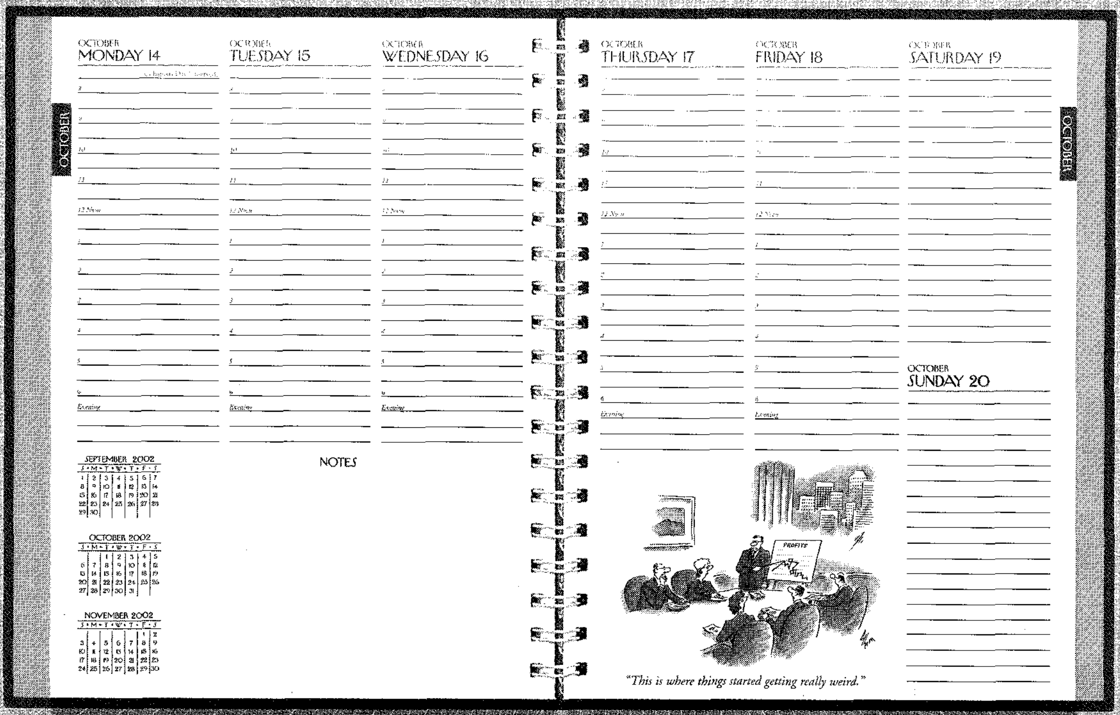
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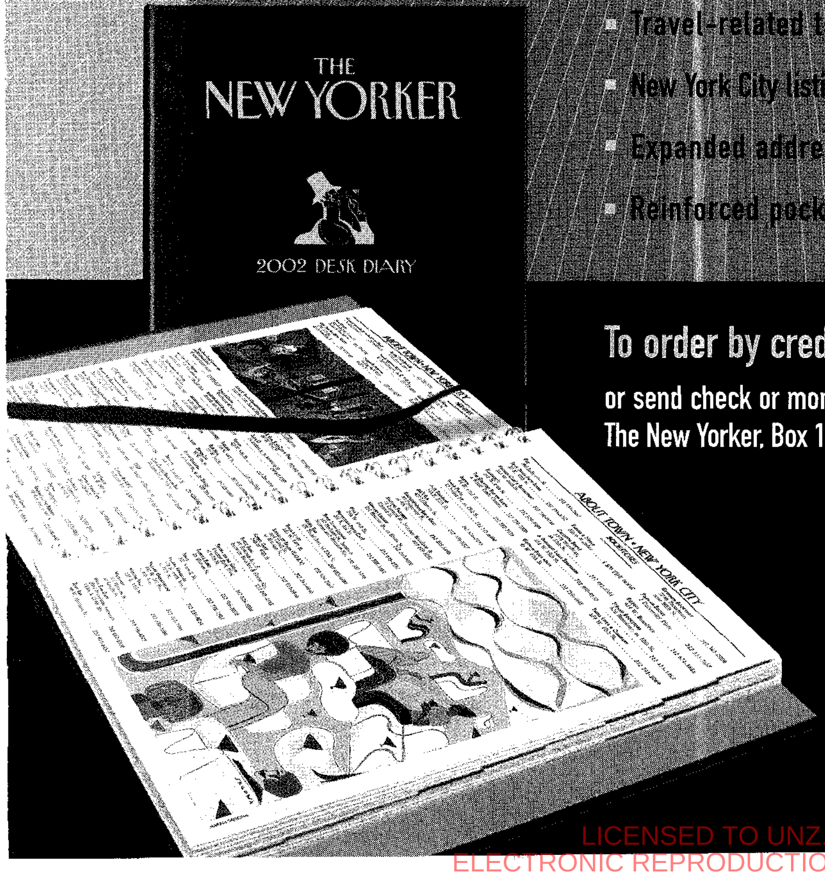
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**THE SHAPE OF THINGS**
Gretchen Mol, Paul Rudd, Rachel Weisz, and Frederick Weller are in the cast of the Almeida Theatre Company staging of Neil LaBute's latest play. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

**SHINY HOT NIGHTS: MORE SONGS OF JONI MITCHELL**
The performance artist John Kelly stars in a follow-up to his 1997 one-man paean to the singer. Saturdays at 8. (Fez, 380 Lafayette St. 533-2680.)

**[SIC]**
Three struggling downtown twentysomethings (Dominic Fumusa, Christina Kirk, and James Urbaniak) live on the same floor in cubicles trying to pass as apartments, where they sidle around each other emotionally as well as physically. The thirty-six-year-old playwright Melissa James Gibson gives them a steady, if disjointed torrent of clever things to say, with a lot of self-consciously odd rhythmic pauses built in. But Pinter it's not. When the characters stop their noisy self-absorption long enough to eavesdrop on the troubled couple in the large apartment below (an intriguing bit of stage design by Louisa Thompson), it turns out there's a better play going on down there. Directed by Daniel Aukin, the acting is good, especially by Urbaniak, whose wry projection wrings the most out of his lines. (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 206-1515.)

**SPEAKING IN TONGUES**
In the terrifically engaging opening scene of Andrew Bovell's play, in which four characters are talking almost simultaneously, no one is possessed and no one is blathering. They are all, however, on the verge of cheating on their spouses. Mark Clements has directed Bovell's fuguelike script with wit and command, so everyone, the audience included, gets the sincere, if desperate, attempt to communicate. After the flashy opening, the playwright's motifs of loneliness, betrayal, and need complicate, interweave, and deepen. Characters only speculated about in Act I become flesh in Act II, others are introduced, one reappears. The players—Karen Allen, Kevin Anderson, Margaret Colin, and Michel R. Gill—have the chops to pull off all nine parts impressively, so every scene delivers an unexpected wrinkle, an unfolding surprise. Bovell achieves something rare in the theatre these days: a tense wonderment about how it's all going to play out, an effect enhanced by Richard Hoover's mirrored set and Elaine J. McCarthy's moody photographic projections. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

**SQUARE ONE**
A revival of Steve Tesich's 1990 play, by the Muse of Fire Theatre Company. (Greenwich Street Theatre, 547 Greenwich St. 917-225-9163. Closes Dec. 16.)

**STAR MESSENGERS**
From the Talking Band, a music-theatre piece about the lives and work of Galileo and Kepler, written by Paul Zimet and Ellen Maddow. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. Closes Dec. 16.)

**SWIMMING TO CAMBODIA**
Spalding Gray performs a "rework in progress" of his 1984 one-man show, about his experience working as an actor on location in the movie "The Killing Fields." Dec. 12 at 8. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651.)

**THOU SHALT NOT**
The psychological thriller "Thérèse Raquin" was Émile Zola's first experiment in naturalism; this ambitious musical retelling of the novel, by Susan Stroman (the director and choreographer), David Thompson (who wrote the book), and Harry Connick, Jr. (who wrote the music), is an experiment in Expressionism. Stroman wants dance to be the narrative engine of the musical, but it seems inadequate to the brooding psychology of Zola's lovers, Laurent (the strapping and charismatic Craig Bierko) and Thérèse (Kate Levering). What Zola imagined as the heart's wilderness Stroman and her team re-create as a theme park of self-destruction. (11/5/01) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

**UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL**
This one-man show, written by Glen Berger and performed by T. Ryder Smith, manages to be both a funny tale of a Dutch librarian's midlife crisis and a serious, intriguing look at the value of any one life. After a book is returned to the library a hundred and thirteen years overdue, the librarian becomes obsessed with finding out how and why. He eventually comes to believe that the Wandering Jew was the errant borrower, whose late return of the volume is one of a series of clues he's left in a desperate attempt to document his existence. Whether the audience buys this or not is irrelevant—it's the power of the librarian's belief that he can create a meaningful whole out of a few bits of ephemera that's being explored. Either way, the play is certainly, as billed, "An Impressive Presentation of Lovely Evidences." Directed by Randy White. (Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

## TABLES FOR TWO

**VIAND COFFEE SHOP**
673 Madison Ave., at 61st St. (751-6622)—On this smart stretch of Madison Avenue, the ladies who lunch may prefer Maxim's, but everyone else piles into the Viand, across the street, a tight and harried space, with seven two-person banquettes on one side, a lunch counter on the other, and brusque staff bustling in between. The wait looks long, but it isn't. They turn you over fast—Viand is the perfect spot for a reluctant lunch. "No time for blah-blah-blah," George Kontoziannis, the owner, says with pride.

At Viand the turkey is the thing, and not just during the holidays. Kontoziannis will not say how many turkeys he and his crew cook each day ("You don't want to brag"), but he'll allow that the number is somewhere around ten. Before roasting, the turkeys are boiled for two hours in giant vats, which, with drumsticks and rump sticking out, call to mind a kitchen in a "Tom and Jerry" cartoon. The steam from the process leaves the plate-glass window up front permanently fogged.

Viand may be a greasy spoon, but its turkey sandwich is neat and clean—fresh meat and iceberg lettuce on rye, mayo or Russian dressing on the side—leaving both the pleasures and limitations of the bird more or less uncamouflaged. It comes in other guises, as well: turkey melt, turkey club, turkey-roast-beef combo, turkey with cranberry sauce, all-turkey chef's salad, and, of course, turkey burger. There are also sardines—the turkey of the sea. Beyond that, really, it's standard coffee-shop grub: Greek salad, chicken Monte Cristo, "plate of ice cream," dollops of coleslaw, and packets of Saltines. At the right time of day (mealtime), the burgers are very good, and the B.L.T.s crisp enough to cut the roof of the mouth. And the chilled rice pudding, served in a fruit cup with a dusting of cinnamon, is worth the hassle of asking the waiter for another course and an amended check. Finish your plate. Aluminum containers to go are thirty-five cents extra. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $4-$13.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*

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**URINETOWN**
The amount of fun to be had at this musical, by Greg Kotis (book and lyrics) and Mark Hollmann (music and lyrics), is in direct proportion to the unpleasantness of its title. Its central idea is that an evil corporation controls all the toilets in a city that bears some resemblance to New York, but the show is really no more and no less than a terrifically spirited sendup of musicals and their conventions, as self-conscious and gag-happy as a Warner Bros. cartoon (not only does a sign saying "Secret Hideout" hang above a secret hideout; the sign has an arrow on it). (10/1/01) (Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

**THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE**
John van Druten's 1943 romantic comedy about an actress and a soldier who have both sworn off love. (Mint Theatre, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-0231. Closes Dec. 30.)

**WHERE'S MY MONEY?**
John Patrick Shanley's dark comedy about two bush-league divorce lawyers from Brooklyn. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

**THE WOMEN**
Scott Elliott directs a cast that includes Kristen Johnston, Rue McClanahan, Cynthia Nixon, Jennifer Tilly, Mary Louise Wilson, and Jennifer Coolidge, in Clare Boothe Luce's 1936 satire. With costumes by Isaac Mizrahi. (11/19/01) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300. Closes Jan. 13.)

**WONDER OF THE WORLD**
A farcical saga of a manic faux-naïve chatterbox, Cass (the fetching and excellent Sarah Jessica Parker), who goes to Niagara Falls in search of a new life after leaving her husband of seven years, Kip (Alan Tudyk). The playwright David Lindsay-Abaire's soi-disant wacky humor offers no revelations, no admissions, no questions, only startling juxtapositions. The show's one incidental delight is the touching Kevin Chamberlin, as Captain Mike, the Niagara tour-boat guide who falls for Cass. (11/12/01) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

## LONG RUNS

**AIDA**
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.
**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.
**BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES**
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.
**CABARET**
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.
**CHICAGO**
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
**CONTACT**
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.
**DE LA GUARDA**
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.
**THE FANTASTICKS**
Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.
**FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001: A SPOOF ODYSSEY**
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.
**THE FULL MONTY**
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.
**KISS ME, KATE**
Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 30.
**THE LION KING**
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
**LES MISÉRABLES**
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
**THE MUSIC MAN**
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.
**PERFECT CRIME**
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.
**THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA**
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
**THE PRODUCERS**
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
**PROOF**
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.
**RENT**
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.
**THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW**
Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.
**STOMP**
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.
**THE SYRINGA TREE**
Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.
**THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE**
Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.
**TICK, TICK . . . BOOM!**
Jane Street Theatre, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.
**TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING**
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.
**THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES**
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

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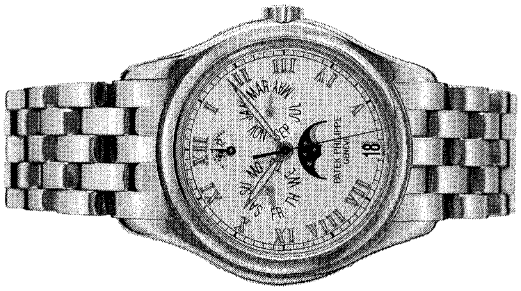

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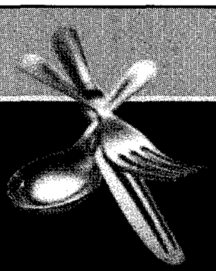

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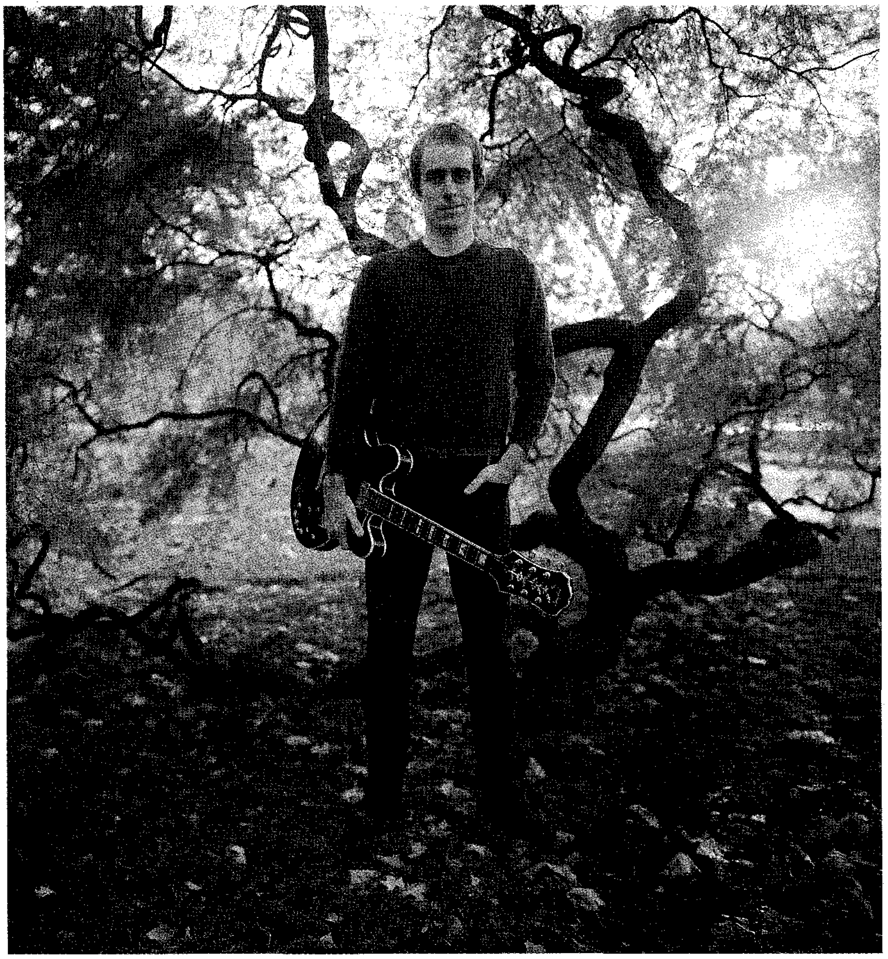

*The singer-songwriter Ted Leo brings his band the Pharmacists to Northsix.*

REUBEN COX

## DANCE

### NEW YORK CITY BALLET

Performances of "The Nutcracker" continue. The boys and girls at the Christmas party are full of Russian verve and pluck in Balanchine's version, and his candies, fairies, and flowers are fragrant with the bloom of romance. In "The Nutcracker," Tchaikovsky was at the peak of his powers as a fabulist, and Balanchine rose to meet him. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 870-5570. Dec. 11-13 at 6, Dec. 14 at 8, Dec. 15 at 2 and 8, Dec. 16 at 1 and 5, and Dec. 18 at 6. Through Dec. 31.)

### ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATRE

Dec. 12 at 8: "The River," "Here . . . Now," and "Revelations." ♦ Dec. 13 at 8: "Episodes," "Shelter," and "Grace." ♦ Dec. 14 at 8: "Night Creature," "Sweet Bitter Love," "Dance at the Gym," and "Caravan." ♦ Dec. 15 at 2: "Serving Nia," "Bad Blood," and "Revelations." ♦ Dec. 15 at 8: "Chocolate Sessions," "Cry," "Episodes," and "Revelations." ♦ Dec. 16 at 3: "Double Exposure," "Episodes," and "Revelations." ♦ Dec. 16 at 7:30: "Chocolate Sessions," "Sweet Bitter Love," "Here . . . Now," and "Revelations." ♦ Dec. 18 at 8: "Blues Suite," "Cry," "Phases," and "Revelations." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Through Dec. 31.)

### BALLETT FRANKFURT

William Forsythe's dancers are virtuosos at noodling around. They divide trunk from limb—their stretched and static torsos resisting the pull of their floppy, mostly bare arms and legs—in order to stay in place. In the three dances on the program (all by Forsythe), patches of silence, a drunken voice sloshing through the same refrain over and over again, and what sounds like the eighties synth band Art of Noise, delivered via staticky radio, serve as accompaniment. The prevailing purposelessness makes one acutely aware of each generous moment of clarity. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Dec. 14-15 at 7:30, Dec. 16 at 3, and Dec. 18 at 7:30. Through Dec. 20.)

### DOUG VARONE AND DANCERS

The most ambitious of Varone's three new works this season is an ensemble piece set to George Antheil's once scandalous, jazz-age "Ballet Mécanique," for pianos, percussion, electric buzzers, and airplane propellers. The choreographer responds to the composer's exhilarating ambivalence toward industrial noise by studding his whorls of motion by his troupe with gestural tics of individuals—a machine's gears continually falling out of synch. Meanwhile, on scrims in the front and back of the stage, whirling concentric circles, reams of chemical formulas, steel beams, an Escher-like maze, and smoke blur by. "Ballet Mécanique" is featured on both of Varone's programs. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Dec. 11 at 7:30, Dec. 12-14 at 8, Dec. 15 at 2 and 8, and Dec. 16 at 2 and 7:30.)

### "A GEOGRAPHY OF RISK"

The San Diego Dance Theatre, under the direction of Jean Isaacs, presents repertory works by Isaacs, Rui Horta, and Monica Bill Barnes. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Dec. 14-16 at 8:30.)

## NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

### "JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER"

Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra join the New York Philharmonic for an evening of "Nutcracker" arrangements (see also Classical Music). (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Dec. 13, Dec. 15, and Dec. 19 at 8; Dec. 14 at 11 A.M.; and Dec. 18 at 7:30.)

### "HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"

**Kevin Mahogany** may be the most genuinely versatile vocalist of his generation, able to handle the blues, ballads, bop, and pop with ease. **Christian McBride,** the second part of this double bill, is one of the most accomplished jazz bassists out there (and he's not yet thirty). He's also an ambitious bandleader, and the exciting news here is that he's fronting a big band at this performance. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Dec. 13 at 8.)

### KING CRIMSON

Having evolved from the prototypical progressive rock band of the seventies into a more streamlined, experimentally funky incarnation in the eighties and finally into an amorphous jamming ensemble, the iconoclastic King Crimson survives under the command of the eccentric guitar warlock Robert Fripp. With the former Led Zeppelin bass player John Paul Jones. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Dec. 13-14 at 8.)

### ETHAN IVERSON

The inclusive and imaginative jazz pianist Iverson, whose day job involves directing the music for Mark Morris's dance company, breaks out on his own this week. With his Bad Plus trio, featuring the bassist Reid Anderson and the drummer David King, he deconstructs a wide range of material, from ABBA ("Knowing Me, Knowing You") to Nirvana ("Smells Like Teen Spirit") to Rodgers and Hart ("Blue Moon"). (Roulette, 228 Broadway, at White St. 219-8284. Dec. 14-16 at 8:30.) ♦ As a solo performer he channels standards, bop, tangos, Americana, and whatever else he feels is fitting. (Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow St. Admission by contribution. Dec. 17-18 at 8:30.)

### SEAN ARDOIN AND ZYDEKOOL

As the great-great nephew of the famed Creole accordionist Amédé Ardoin and the grandson of the great ambassador of *la musique créole* Alphonse (Bois Sec) Ardoin, this thirty-two-year-old multi-instrumentalist is part of a long and distinguished musical dynasty. But Ardoin is hardly content to live off the fame of his forebears. With his band, ZydeKool, he's updated the washboard-fed sound of southwestern Louisiana by adding R. & B. touches, Funkadelic-esque guitar solos, and occasional rap-like vocalizing. This may sound like a bad idea, but Ardoin has the genes of a true innovator, and his ZydeKool does his ancestors proud. (La Belle Époque, 827 Broadway, between 12th and 13th Sts. For more information, call 685-7597. Dec. 16 at 7:30.)

### JON FADDIS

The still-brash, former wunderkind trumpeter never lacks for bravura playing—if you could you'd play those effortless high-C dog calls, too. Faddis's leadership of the Carnegie Hall Jazz Orchestra, though, has brought vision and a tempered elegance to his flamboyant playing: his early reputation as an excitable Dizzy Gillespie clone has all but faded. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Dec. 17 at 8.)

### THE IRISH TENORS

Finbar Wright, Anthony Kearns, and Ronan Tynan offer an evening of songs from the ould sod. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Dec. 17 at 8.)

## CLUBS

*Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.*

### B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL

237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Dec. 15-16: Pop legend **Ronnie Spector** holds her very own Christmas spectacular. Dec. 17: Taking a break from the ribald soap opera of Mötley Crüe (lavishly documented in lurid detail in the book "The Dirt," which hit the shelves this summer), **Vince Neil** rides solo.

### BOTTOM LINE

15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Dec. 14-15: "The Downtown Messiah." The former Bongos front man **Richard Barone,** the musical chameleon **David Johansen,** the singer **Jane Siberry,** and many others offer an abbreviated recital of Handel's masterpiece.

**BOWERY BALLROOM**
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Dec. 14: The **Philadelphia Experiment** first came about last year when Ahmir Thompson (the drummer for the hip-hop collective the Roots), Christian McBride (a well respected bassist—see the "Highlights in Jazz" concert listing, above), Uri Caine (a downtown jazz pianist), and other musicians from the City of Brotherly Love gathered in a studio to cut a fusion record. Perhaps in a live setting the music will transcend the limits of the genre.

**FEZ**
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Dec. 17: The **Haoles** return to the days when there were forty-eight states in the union and the ukulele was all the rage. With the tuba-and-harmonica antics of **Hazmat Modine.** Dec. 18: The Candy Butchers front man **Mike Viola** rings in the holidays. The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

**IRVING PLAZA**
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Dec. 13: Noisy progenitors of experimental rock in the discordant vein of vintage Sonic Youth, **Blonde Redhead** takes its name from a song by Arto Lindsay's seminal no-wave trio, DNA. Dec. 14-15: The local favorites the **Bogmen** played dark, guitar-driven alt-pop before they broke up a few years back. Now they are reuniting to benefit Secret Smiles, a charity founded by the keyboardist's wife, Kristy Irvine Ryan, an equities trader who died in the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center. With the **Knockout Drops** and **Gordon Gano,** of the Violent Femmes.

**JOE'S PUB**
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Dec. 12: The tabla player and d.j. **Karsh Kale.** Dec. 15: The three-woman operation known as **Betty** unleashes its high-wire-without-a-net cabaret act in a seasonal show featuring such guest musicians and storytellers as Toshi Reagon, Dan Zane, Sean Altman, and others.

**KNITTING FACTORY**
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Dec. 12: The former Dream Syndicate front man **Steve Wynn.** Dec. 13: **Marc Ribot y los Cubanos Postizos** appropriate the arrangements of Arsenio Rodriguez and other pre-Castro bandleaders.

**NORTHSIX**
66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—Dec. 15: **Ted Leo and the Pharmacists.** Leo, a true hero of the underground, came close to fame a few years ago as the front man for the neo-mod outfit Chisel. Since the demise of that band and a period of sonic experimentation he's matured into an accomplished songwriter. On his latest solo album, "The Tyranny of the Distance," Leo displays enough insightful lyrics, aggressive guitar work, and poignant vocalizing to rank him with the likes of the great British singer-songwriter Billy Bragg.

**S.O.B.'S**
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Dec. 12: **DJ Krush,** a young Japanese native who's turned his love of hip-hop into a lucrative career, and the **Nortec Collective,** a Tijuana-based group of musicians, architects, graphic artists, and the like who have surprised themselves, and the world, by successfully mixing accordion samples, tuba loops, and other bits of their native *norteño* music with contemporary electronic elements. Dining.

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

**ALGONQUIN HOTEL**
59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through Jan. 12: **Andrea Marcovicci** sings "Someone to Watch Over Me," "Hello Young Lovers," and other songs made famous by the actress Gertrude Lawrence. Dining.

**BIRDLAND**
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Dec. 13-15: The **Benny Golson** quartet. The tenor saxophonist Golson, with his brawny tone, his Byas-meets-Coltrane manner, and his impeccable credentials (the Jazztet, Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers), is also an extremely accomplished composer, with at least four classics—"I Remember Clifford," "Whisper Not," "Blues March," and "Stablemates"—to his name. Dining.

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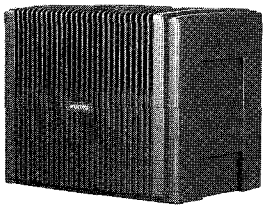

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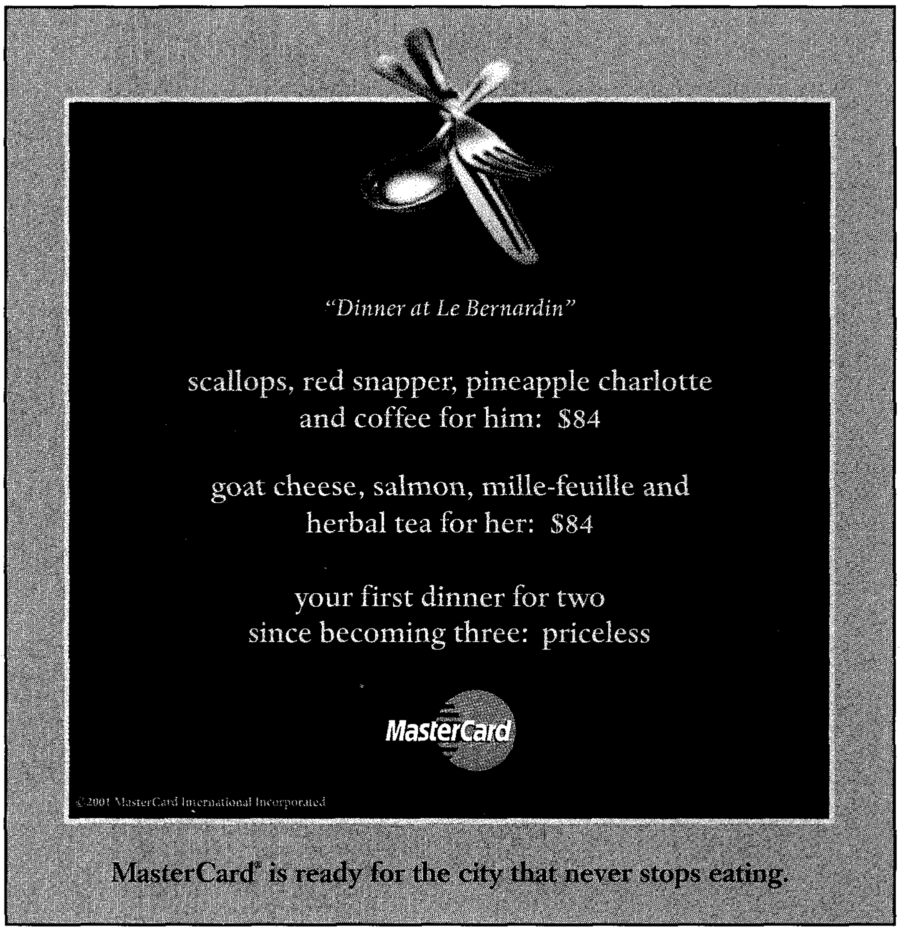

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**BLUE NOTE**
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—For the second of this three-week run celebrating his sixtieth birthday, the master pianist **Chick Corea** welcomes the vibraphone innovator **Gary Burton** for duets on Dec. 11-12, hosts a reunion of his fusiony **Akoustic Band** with bassist John Patitucci and drummer Dave Weckl on Dec. 13-14, and presents his impressive **Origin** sextet on Dec. 15-16.

**CARLYLE HOTEL**
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and the magisterially puckish **Bobby Short.** On Mondays the café is home to **Woody Allen and the Eddie Davis New Orleans Jazz Band.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Barbara Carroll** is in attendance.

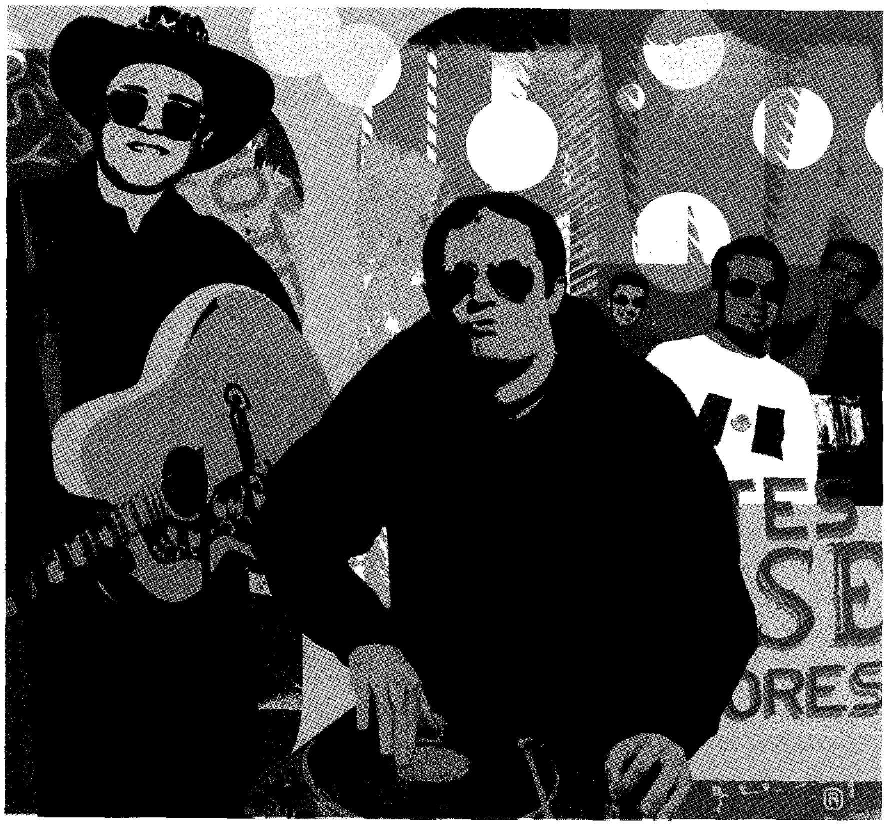
**FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY**
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through Dec. 22: Back on his home turf, the pianist **Michael Feinstein** offers a program of endearing holiday fare. The lively evening also turns downright patriotic at times—not every cabaret performance includes "God Bless America," "The House I Live In," and a musical adaptation of Emma Lazarus's "The New Colossus." Fortunately, the singer's wit and unflappable spirit keeps things from getting too sentimental, and the mid-set appearance of the sweet-voiced **Maude Maggart** nicely leavens Feinstein's sometimes strenuous theatricality.

**IRIDIUM**
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Dec. 16: The **David Murray** octet. He jumps from band to band with the same frequency that other people change their socks, but the saxophonist David Murray keeps returning to his octet. The ramshackle yet surprisingly supple unit generates enough tonal heft for the players to throw their weight around yet provides plenty of space for the spirited solos of the leader. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

**KNITTING FACTORY**
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Dec. 17: The **Sean Smith** quartet. The bassist Smith has spent the better part of the past two decades providing first-rate support for others—it's time he stepped out on his own. He's been steadily building both a strong book of original pieces and a firm rapport with the saxophonist Allen Mezquida.

**UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ**
351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—**David Weiss** knows the bop-trumpet literature, having worked closely with Freddie Hubbard and having recently prepared the four-trumpet arrangements for the "Night of the Cookers" show at Lincoln Center. He brings his own horn and a historically savvy sextet to this agreeable Brooklyn haunt on Dec. 14-15.

**VILLAGE VANGUARD**
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Dec. 16: Nobody can replace the recently departed piano giant Tommy Flanagan, but anyone who can call up his memory, no matter how fleetingly, is certainly welcome. With his crystalline tone and well-spoken improvisations, **Bill Charlap** is nothing if not an elegant player. That his expert trio is fleshed out by two Flanagan veterans—the bassist **Peter Washington** and the drummer **Kenny Washington**—doesn't hurt a bit. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.



*The Tijuana-based Nortec Collective, appearing this week at S.O.B.'s.*

JOHN RITTER

## ART
## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

**METROPOLITAN MUSEUM**
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Paul Signac 1863-1935: Master Neo-Impressionist."** Through Dec. 30. ♦ **"Quintet of Remembrance,"** a handsome and pretentious video by Bill Viola, is the first work in its medium to enter the Met's collection. Through May 5. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—An Alberto Giacometti retrospective reacquaints us with the Swiss sculptor's iconic skinny statues while emphasizing

his paintings and his less esteemed Surrealist objects of the nineteen-thirties. Revision is not achieved. Except for "The Palace at 4 A.M." and "Woman with Her Throat Cut"—two 1932 marvels that bespeak bolt-from-the-blue inspiration like that of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan"—the objects show Giacometti in a weakly pandering mode. The paintings, mostly portraits from the nineteen-fifties, expend obsessive energy to visually skimpy ends. But the great statues are more engaging than ever. These tragicomic presences don't so much stand in the world as stand up to it, ravaged by the very space around them but maintaining vestigial subjectivity in the thrust of a chin, the tilt of a hip, and the set of a shoulder—calling to the heart. Through Jan. 8. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

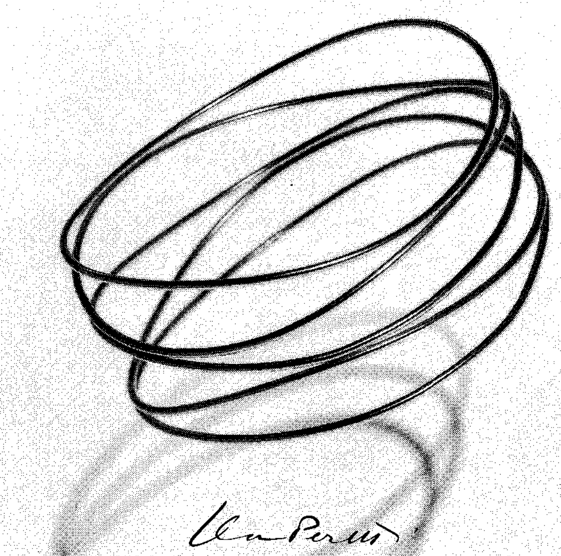
**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM**
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—For **"Brazil: Body & Soul,"** the Thomas Krens team has gone to new extremes, utterly transforming the museum and leaving one awed by the mega-exhibition's scope, design, audacity, and cost. The rotunda is now a Stygian theatre, with a massive baroque altarpiece in its center. From there, viewers ascend past ranks of polychromed Madonnas, carved lions, ex-votos, and tribal videos and arrive, finally, at a celestial ring of white rooms, where the baroque (which lasted nearly three centuries in Brazil) abruptly gives way to modernism. Through Jan. 27. ♦ **"Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People."** Through March 3. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

**WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART**
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—**"Over the Line: The Art and Life of Jacob Lawrence."** Through Feb. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays, 1 to 9.)

**BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART**
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art from the British Museum."** Through Feb. 24. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

**NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN MUSEUM**
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (369-4880)—The art-world equivalent of Ed Wood, the eccentric Louis M. Eilshemius (1864-1941) practiced his own brand of "bad painting" long before the phrase was coined in the seventies to describe a loosey-goosey strain of figuration. Now well known for faux-naïve pinup portraits that prefigure everyone from Picabia and Balthus to Currin and Yuskavage, this academically trained, self-proclaimed "King of American Artist-Painters" labored for most of his life in curmudgeonly obscurity. The selection of forty-four paintings (from a reported oeuvre of thousands) includes the requisite stiff-limbed cuties but also pastoral scenes of the Delaware Water Gap, reminiscent of Corot, and a bizarre view of a zeppelin in flames over New Jersey. Don't miss the small gallery of urban landscapes where the streets of New York glow with a luminous mystery worthy of Ryder. Through Dec. 30. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, noon to 5, Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 5.)

**NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY**
2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—For many years, John Koch was an embarrassment to American painting. A mustachioed, bald, epicene aesthete, Koch painted cocktail parties in his elegant El Dorado apartment with finicky, European finesse. He was the un-Pollock, the Meissonier of Central Park West. Even today, his art remains a litmus test for diehard modernists. For the rest of us, though, this retrospective is a long-overdue pleasure. The fifty interiors, gilded by typically Kochian late-afternoon sunlight, are full of marvellous touches, often rising to Degas-like perfection. Koch's occasional forays into erotica are less compelling, though he did paint one unforgettably libidinous icon: "The Sculptor," a hymn to male pulchritude that would have made Liberace blush. Through Jan. 27. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)



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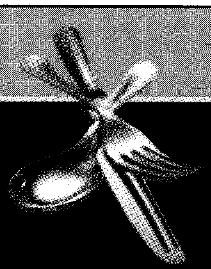

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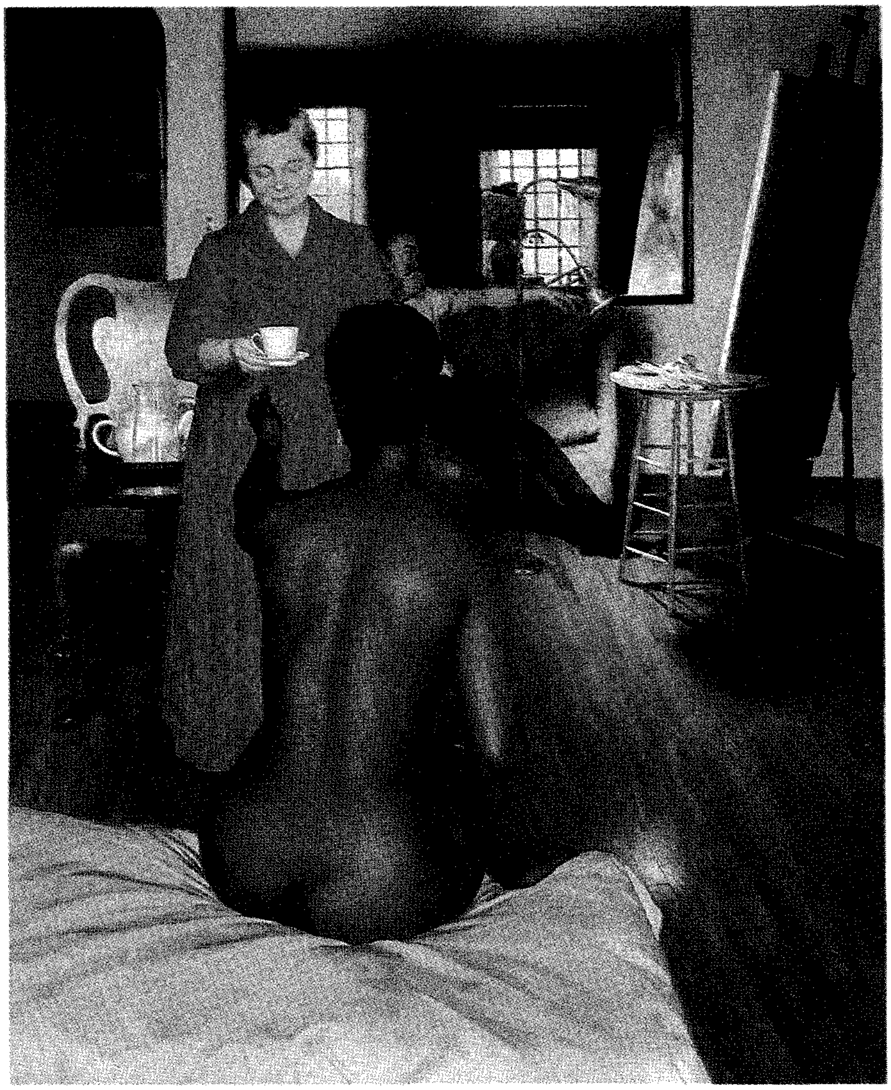

*"Interlude," by the Park-view artist John Koch, at the New-York Historical Society.*

## GALLERIES–UPTOWN

*Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.*

**JAKE BERTHOT**
The former abstractionist steeps his preferred subjects—meadows, groves, and massive tree trunks—in a lukewarm, greenish murkiness. One suspects Berthot not only of painting by moonlight (the titles give that much away already) but also of wearing sunglasses while doing so. Is there a kind of contrarian romanticism at work here? Probably, but the effect seems soothing and moderate, more Celestial Seasonings than mystical reverie. Through Dec. 22. (McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 688-5951.)

**MEL BOCHNER**
A dozen of Bochner's early "Numbers" pieces from the sixties and seventies are reprised here, making a sort of "Portrait of the Conceptualist as a Young Man." Most use only the sparest of materials: soap, wrapping paper, tape, and pebbles. Depending on one's temperament, they are either dazzling or infuriating—philosophical haikus, or Mensa pickup lines. Accompanying them is a group of recent paintings, which are lovely in an uncharacteristically cloudy, chalkboardy way. It's as though Bochner had wandered into Cy Twombly's classroom. Through Dec. 15. (Markey, 42 E. 76th St. 517-9892.)

**JULIE MEHRETU**
This young Ethiopian-born, New York-based artist creates intricate Malevich-meets-"The Matrix" spatial effects: her architectonic abstractions explode from the center of each canvas as if a hole has been punched in the picture plane from an alternate visual reality. The ground looks like vellum but is in fact layers of sprayed acrylic, so the figures above and below it—fragments of blueprints, plumes of smoke, the dotted tracks of map legends—seem to melt or materialize. Through Dec. 22. (The Project, 427 W. 126th St. 662-8610.)

### *Short List*

**ROY LICHTENSTEIN**
Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 744-7400. Through Jan. 12.

**GABRIEL OROZCO**
Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Through Dec. 29.

**MARK ROTHKO**
Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through Jan. 5.

## GALLERIES–CHELSEA

**ALBERT OEHLEN**
Two exhibits sample the German artist's self-mocking, slovenly charm. Uptown, a group of self-portraits from the eighties show Oehlen trying on sardonic guises: he's a clown in armor one minute, a Bohemian cyclops the next. Downtown, the recent paintings drift into Rauschenberg territory. They're lazy palimpsests, full of sampled advertisements and spray paint: pluralism on automatic pilot. They wouldn't amount to much if it weren't for Oehlen's weird knack for finding just the right unlikely riff, as in the giant Groucho nose that sits at the center of a painting called "Party Dreams." Through Jan. 12. (Skarstedt, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St., 737-2060; and Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St., 206-9100.)

**MICHAEL SMITH AND JOSHUA WHITE**
Mockumentary meets installation as the gallery is transformed into a showroom for a fictional wellness center and corporate retreat located on the grounds of a former artists' colony. Failure and fatuousness are the artists' targets as they skewer everything from Internet startups to inflated auction prices. The show is funny if overwrought, with a rocking chair (a facsimile of one reportedly purchased at the colony by J.F.K.) to an architectural model that rivals "Spinal Tap" 's Stonehenge in its absurdity. Through Dec. 30. (Burgin, 243 W. 18th St. 462-2668.)

**"ALPHA FLIGHT"**
The show takes its title from a Marvel comic book, and its three artists all share a superhero's taste for flashy transformation. Sissel Kardel metamorphoses into a woodland sprite in a self-portrait that matches the calligraphic wash of Chinese landscape painting with a My Little Pony palette. Kelley Walker converts a salvaged hunk of orange truck into a piece of absurdist propaganda, advising viewers in an attached poster to "Resist capitalism. Interrogate spatial relations." Eli Sudbrack does both in a playful mural-cum-collage that plays as fast and loose with scale as it does with copyright, appropriating everything from Pink Floyd album art to the disco-era DC Comics character the Dazzler. Through Dec. 30. (JCP, 526 W. 26th St. 917-566-7760.)

### *Short List*

**JOHN CURRIN**
Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000. Through Dec. 15.

**WILLEM DE KOONING**
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200. Through Dec. 22.

**RICHARD SERRA**
Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111. Through Dec. 15.

## GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

**RICO GATSON**
This kaleidoscopic show is made up of five ambient films, which do away with the narratives of the movies they excerpt just as dance mixes alter the melodies of songs. Gatson pulls representative scenes from "Alien," "Foxy Brown," and "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," among other movies, and runs them through his blender; the pulsing, swirling finished work is more abstract—Sigourney Weaver's cheek multiplies and gobbles itself up—than his previous projects, which often starred himself. Viewers may miss Gatson's mischievous presence (in an earlier work, he donned a floral K.K.K. robe and gambolled in front of a white picket fence). Through Dec. 22. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.)

### *Short List*

**"WIDELY UNKNOWN"**
Deitch Projects, 18 Wooster St. 343-7300. Through Dec. 22.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

**JAYNE HINDS BIDAUT**
The Museum of Natural History could stop worrying about fund-raising if only they got a nickel every time a contemporary artist snuck in a reference to their vintage dioramas. Bidaut's excuse is that she finds taxidermy technically convenient (her dry-plate tintypes require motionless subjects) and thematically suitable, since she takes on the big abstractions, nature and death. In the show's largest work, a "Paradise Lost" of fifty plates, her animal subjects are joined by human skeletons standing in for Adam

and Eve. While the scale of that work is a technical accomplishment, her dark nudes and little birds offer more per square inch. Through Jan. 5. (Ricco Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819.)

**TIM DAVIS**
Big nocturnal color shots of cheap, ugly houses bathed in garish light from commercial signs recall the old film-noir motif of a hotel room with flashing neon outside the window. Davis uses it to invest well-worn themes of forlorn Americana with feverish intensity. Gorgeous and depressing, his pictures display a sure instinct for places whose physical decay is a step in the right direction. Through Dec. 22. (Sikkema, 520 W. 22nd St. 929-2262.)

**FLOR GARDUÑO**
This former assistant to Manuel Alvarez Bravo gained acclaim with her documents of indigenous people of Mexico and South and Central America, and their rituals. Here, in what is billed as more personal work, she pays tribute to the articulation of light on the female breast. Props help break up the pious beauty of the busty celebration: one nude is burdened with a pair of silvery prehistoric-looking fish, and, in the one funny print, bumpy lemons mirror a pair of dramatically lit nipples. Through Dec. 29. (Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059.)

**SAM SAMORE**
Having tired of murders and suicides, Samore presents twentysomethings in love. These pictures, infused with the creepy voyeurism of Warhol's early films, show their subjects' faces up close, awake and—in the chilling, closely cropped "The Dreaming" series—asleep. The work looks as if it's taken from a surveillance tape, though there's no crime in the frame; perhaps the real trespass is our spying. Through Dec. 22. (Gorney Bravin & Lee, 534 W. 26th St. 352-8372.)

**INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY**
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000—**"Helmut Newton: Work,"** a retrospective; **"The Construction of the Paris Opera: Photographs of Delmaet and Durandelle"**; and **"'Greed' and Other Recent Acquisitions"** are on show through Dec. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

### *Short List*

**PAVEL BANKA**
Klotz/Sirmon, 511 W. 25th St. 327-2211.
Through Feb. 2.
**WYNN BULLOCK (1902-1975)**
Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930. Through Jan. 5.
**IMOGEN CUNNINGHAM (1883-1976)**
Stevenson, 338 W. 23rd St. 352-0070.
Through Jan. 5.
**JOEL MEYEROWITZ**
Meyerowitz, 580 Broadway. 625-3434.
Through Dec. 15.
**COLLIER SCHORR**
303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.
Through Dec. 21.
**"HERE IS NEW YORK"**
116 Prince St. 334-6684. Through Dec. 24.

## AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

**SOTHEBY'S**
Dec. 12 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: "Fine Books and Manuscripts, Including Americana." The highlight of this impressive sale is Margaret Salinger's collection of thirty-two letters from her father, J. D. Salinger (to be sold as one lot), ranging from affectionate daddy-to-daughter postcards to later correspondence concerning her pregnancy. Among the other items are a second-edition copy of "Saint-Graal" (from 1523), the rarest of all Arthurian romances, and one of thirty-one known vellum copies of W. J. Stone's facsimile of the Declaration of Independence, from 1823. ♦ Dec. 14 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Asian and European carpets. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

**CHRISTIE'S**
Dec. 14 at 10 A.M. and 2: The first of two days of sales of items from the collection of Estelle Doheny focusses on rare books and manuscripts, including a first edition of the King James Bible, a selection

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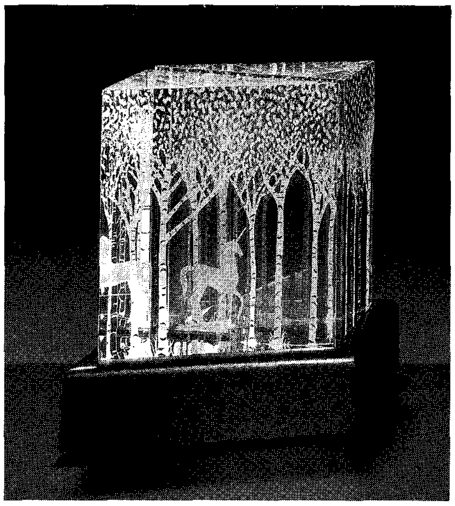

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of medieval manuscripts, and Presidential autographs. ♦ Dec. 17 at 10 A.M. and 2: Antique glass paperweights and decorative art works from the Doheny collection. ♦ Dec. 18 at 10 A.M.: Asian and European rugs and carpets. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

**DOYLE**
Dec. 12-13 at 10 A.M.: Costume jewelry and couture. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

**PHILLIPS**
Dec. 12 at 2: Design from the twentieth century to the present. Among the featured items are an early-edition Marcel Breuer "Wassily" chair, manufactured by Thonet, and a group of "Holey" chairs, designed this year by Michael Young. (3 W. 57th St. 570-4830.)

**SWANN**
Dec. 13 at 10:30 A.M.: A hundred lots of maps and atlases. Among the rarer selections is a wood-engraved world map from the Nuremberg Chronicle of 1493, one of the earliest printed maps to be made. ♦ Dec. 13 at 2:30: "Fine Natural History and Historical Prints." (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

## CLASSICAL MUSIC
## OPERA

**METROPOLITAN OPERA**
"**La Traviata**," with June Anderson, Frank Lopardo, and John Avey; the conductor is Maurizio Benini. (Dec. 12 at 8.) ♦ With Anthony Michaels-Moore replacing Avey. (Dec. 15 at 8 and Dec. 18 at 7:30.) ♦ The première performances of Herbert Wernicke's new production of "**Die Frau Ohne Schatten**," the grandest—and most problematic—of Richard Strauss's collaborations with Hugo von Hofmannsthal. With Deborah Voigt, Gabriele Schnaut, Hanna Schwarz, Thomas Moser, Wolfgang Brendel, and Eike Wilm Schulte; Christian Thielemann. (Dec. 13 and Dec. 17 at 7.) ♦ "**Madama Butterfly**," with Catherine Malfitano, Maria Zifchak, Walter Fraccaro, and Kim Josephson; Marco Armiliato. (Dec. 14 at 8.) ♦ The latest outing of the Met's 1983 production of "**Arabella**," Strauss and Hofmannsthal's lighthearted romantic fantasy of nineteenth-century Vienna, is under-directed and a bit lacking in style, but the lyrical vocal bloom of Renée Fleming's soprano gives it a strong center. Christoph Eschenbach's conducting is not big on detail, but he draws out lots of rosy, soft-edged sound from the orchestra. Also with Barbara Bonney (a very appealing Zdenka), Raymond Very, Hans-Joachim Ketelsen, and Eric Halfvarson (dead-on as Arabella's spendthrift dad). (Dec. 15 at 1:30. This is the final performance.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

**DICAPO OPERA**
Louis Salemno conducts a cast of promising young singers in a production of Massenet's "**Werther**." (Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 76th St. 288-9438. Dec. 14-15 at 8 and Dec. 16 at 4.)

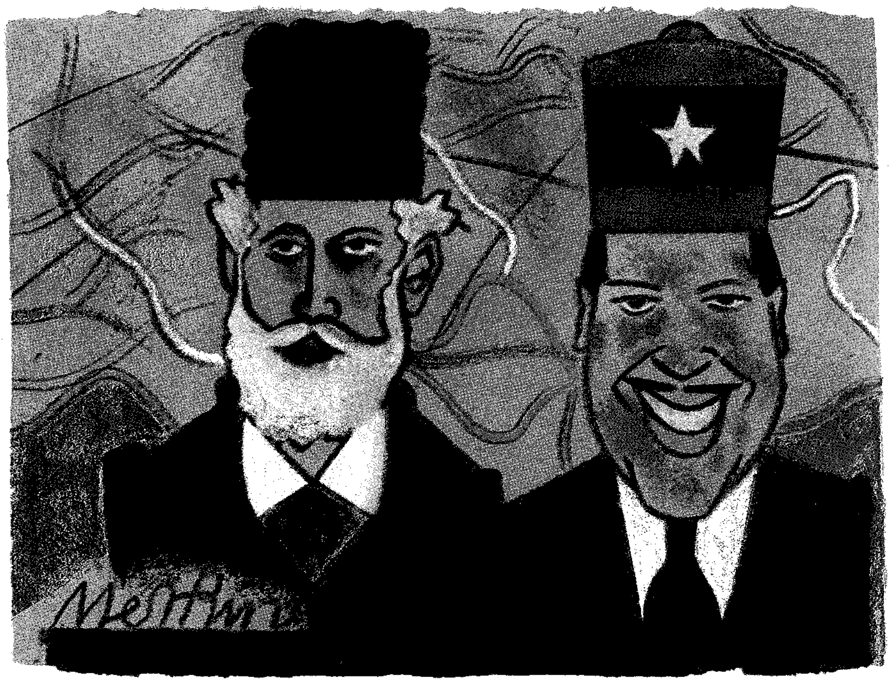
**AMATO OPERA**
The venerable chamber company presents "**The Magic Flute**," in English, conducted and directed by Anthony Amato. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Dec. 15 at 7:30 and Dec. 16 at 2:30. Through Jan. 6.)

**OPERA COMPANY OF BROOKLYN**
Ira Siff, known to legions of fans as the founder and star of the spoof company La Gran Scena Opera, makes his New York début as an opera director with a production of "**Madama Butterfly**," updated to occupied Japan after the Second World War. Michelle Mattalina, Elizabeth Saunders, German Villar, and Galen Scott Bower take the leading roles; the conductor is Jay D. Meetze. (Klitgord Auditorium, New York City Technical College, 300 Jay St., Brooklyn. Dec. 15 at 8. 718-986-3294. This is the only performance.)

## MUSIC FOR THE HOLIDAYS

**"MESSIAH"**
St. Thomas Episcopal Church, with its celebrated choir of men and boys, gives one of the best presentations of Handel's oratorio in the city, with the early-music group Concert Royal and soloists. (Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. For information about tickets, call 664-9360. Dec. 18 and Dec. 20 at 7:30.) ♦ Another topnotch "Messiah" is performed by Musica Sacra, directed by Richard Westenburg. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Dec. 18 at 8.)

**METROPOLITAN MUSEUM**
The Met hosts a variety of holiday concerts this week, all taking place before the museum's great Christmas tree in the Medieval Sculpture Hall. Dec. 12: The New York Big Brass play favorite works by Bizet, Tchaikovsky, Gabrieli, and others. ♦ Dec. 16: New Haven's Trinity Boys Choir sings Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols," along with other seasonal favorites. ♦ Dec. 18: "A Baroque Christmas," with Frederick Renz directing the Ensemble for Early Music in a program of English ballads, Scots carols, and German lieder. (Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. All concerts are presented at 6:30 and 8:30.)



*The Philharmonic plays Tchaikovsky and Ellington side by side, beginning Dec. 13.*

**RIVERSIDE CHORAL SOCIETY**
Patrick Gardner conducts a holiday program of Saint-Saëns (the charming "Christmas Oratorio"), Finzi, Bruckner (the "Ave Maria"), and others. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. Dec. 14 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

**"UNSILENT NIGHT"**
Phil Kline, the avant-garde guitarist, gives the art of holiday carolling his own special twist, distributing fifty different cassette tapes filled with otherworldly voices, bells, and ambient drones to a volunteer boom-box brigade, who then walk his "moving audio sculpture" around Greenwich Village. (Washington Square Park Arch. Dec. 15, beginning at 7. Volunteers are welcome.)

## ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

**NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC**
In a special holiday concert series, the orchestra, conducted by Leonard Slatkin, joins forces with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra to perform selections from Wynton Marsalis's "All Rise" (premièred by the Philharmonic in 1999) along with two versions of the "Nutcracker" Suite: Tchaikovsky's original, plus the suave Ellington/Strayhorn jazz arrangement. Movements from the suites will be interwoven with each other, letting two giants converse as equals. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Dec. 13, Dec. 15, and Dec. 19 at 8; Dec. 14 at 11 A.M.; and Dec. 18 at 7:30.)

**BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**
Seiji Ozawa leads the orchestra in music by Beethoven (the Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, with Dubravka Tomsic) and Bartók (the Concerto for Orchestra) at Carnegie Hall. (247-7800. Dec. 12 at 8.)

**KIROV ORCHESTRA AT CARNEGIE HALL**
Back home in St. Petersburg, Valery Gergiev leads this superb Russian orchestra—with its brazen brass, dulcet strings, and dark forest of woodwinds—through its paces at the Mariinsky Theatre, turning it into a concert-hall powerhouse when on tour. Dec. 13 at 8: Music by Liadov, Stravinsky, Rachmaninoff (the Piano Concerto No. 4, with Alexander Slobodyanik), and Scriabin (the "Poem of Ecstasy"). ♦ Dec. 14 at 8: The pianist Vladimir Feltsman plays "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini" on an all-Rachmaninoff program, which concludes with the Symphony No. 2 in E Minor. ♦ Dec. 15 at 8: An all-Prokofiev concert, including the Piano Concerto No. 2 (with Alexander Toradze) and the Symphony No. 5. ♦ Dec. 16 at 3: The orchestra goes it alone in music by Wagner, Debussy ("La Mer"), and Tchaikovsky (the Fifth Symphony). (247-7800.)

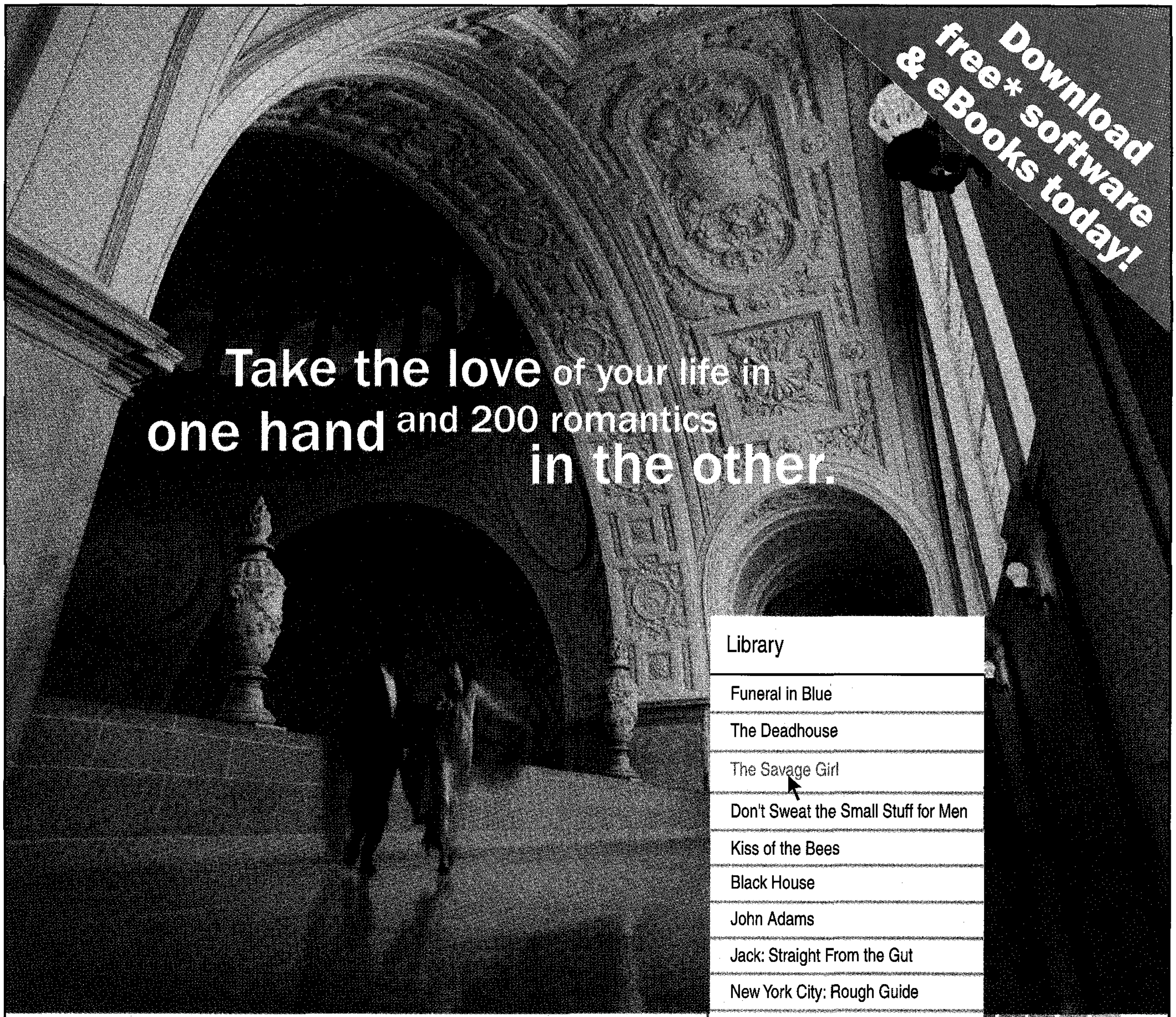
**BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC**
Robert Spano conducts a concert celebrating the ancient musical traditions of Greece, including Bernstein's "Serenade" for Violin and Orchestra (with Laura Park), based on Plato's "Symposium," and the première of "The Cows of Apollo," by Christopher Theofanides (with the librettist William M. Hoffman), a theatrical work based on a satyr comedy about the invention of music. The vocal soloists are Heidi Grant Murphy, Earle Patriarco, Nathaniel Webster, and Mark DiCarlo, along with the New York Virtuoso Singers. (BAM Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Dec. 14-15 at 8.)

**MUSIC BEFORE 1800**
The choir of Corpus Christi Church sings multi-choir music for Christmas by Palestrina, Schütz, Gabrieli, and others. (529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Dec. 16 at 4.)

## RECITALS

**NAUMBURG FOUNDATION GALA**
Dawn Upshaw, Robert Mann, Carol Wincenc, and the Emerson String Quartet were all helped in their early careers by the munificence of the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation, which has sponsored awards, recitals, and commissions for young musicians for seventy-five years. These artists and many of their distinguished colleagues pay tribute to their benefactors in a gala concert of music by Beethoven, Debussy, Carter, and others, at Alice Tully Hall. (721-6500. Dec. 13 at 7:30.)

RICHARD MERKIN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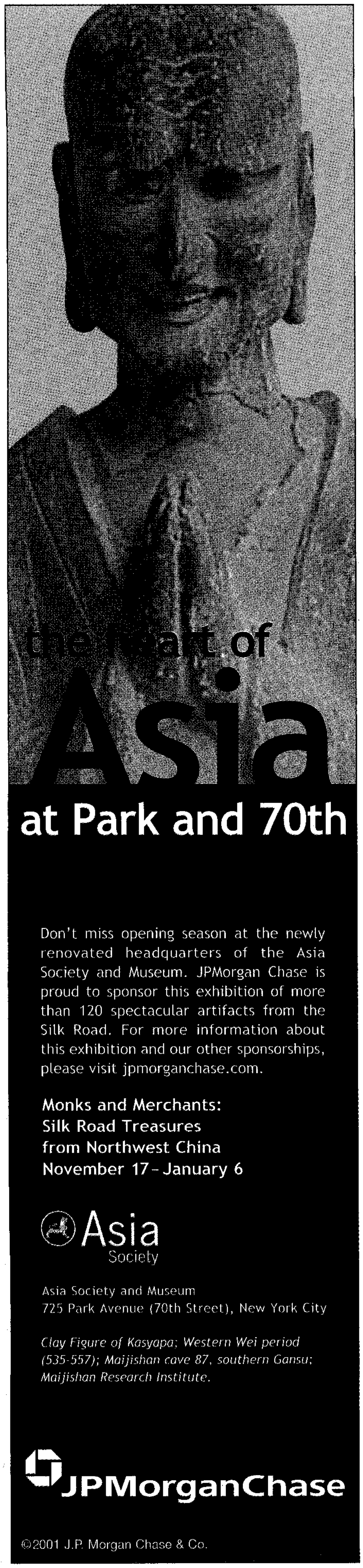

Don't miss opening season at the newly renovated headquarters of the Asia Society and Museum. JPMorgan Chase is proud to sponsor this exhibition of more than 120 spectacular artifacts from the Silk Road. For more information about this exhibition and our other sponsorships, please visit jpmorganchase.com.

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*Clay Figure of Kasyapa; Western Wei period (535-557); Maijishan cave 87, southern Gansu; Maijishan Research Institute.*

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**"INTERPRETATIONS" SERIES: SARAH CAHILL**
Ruth Crawford Seeger, still too little known, was one of the most daring American composers of the nineteen-twenties and thirties; Cahill pays tribute to her at Merkin Concert Hall, playing new piano pieces by Eva Beglarian, Julia Wolfe, Pauline Oliveros, and others, along with Crawford's "Preludes." (129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Dec. 13 at 8.)

**BARGEMUSIC**
Dec. 13 and Dec. 15 at 7:30: The oboist Douglas Boyd is featured in quartets for oboe and strings by Stamitz and Carter, on a program that also includes Beethoven's Serenade for String Trio, Op. 8. ♦ Dec. 14 at 7:30 and Dec. 16 at 4: Music for soprano and instruments by Vaughan Williams, Villa Lobos, and Hindemith (all sung by Janice Felty), along with two works by Mozart (including the Quartet for Oboe and Strings, with Boyd). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

**ISABEL BAYRAKDARIAN AND MARTIN KATZ**
The soprano and the pianist perform songs by Debussy, Tchaikovsky, Hovhaness, and others. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Dec. 14 at 8.)

**JOAN KWUON**
The violinist presents a nicely balanced program of classic and contemporary works (including music by Brahms, Enesco, Previn, and Carter), at Alice Tully Hall. Assaf Weisman is at the piano. (721-6500. Dec. 14 at 8.)

**LES BORÉADES**
The Canadian period-instrument ensemble makes its New York début at the Frick Collection, presenting music by Telemann, Handel (excerpts from the opera "Acis and Galatea"), Corrette, and others. (1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Dec. 16 at 5.)

**DMITRI HVOROSTOVSKY**
Hvorostovsky brings his dusky, pliant bass-baritone to bear on songs by Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff, at Carnegie Hall; the pianist is Mikhail Arkadiev. (247-7800. Dec. 16 at 7:30.)

**PROKOFIEV'S PIANO SONATAS**
A mini-marathon of the complete sonatas at Miller Theatre, presented by the musicians of the renowned Toradze Piano Studio (including the fiery Alexander Toradze himself). (Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Dec. 16 at 7:30.)

**SARAH ROTHENBERG: "SHADOWS AND FRAGMENTS, TIME AND MEMORY"**
Rothenberg, an innovative American pianist, presents a recital combining music by Bach, Chopin, Ustvolskaya, and others with poems by Akhmatova, Baudelaire, and Adam Zagajewski. The readers, seen in video clips, include Joseph Brodsky and Louis Jourdan. (92nd St. Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500. Dec. 17 at 8.)

## ABOVE AND BEYOND

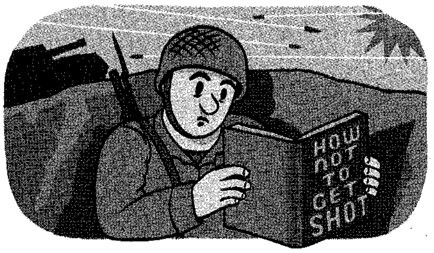
**READINGS**
Dec. 12 at 8:30: By Rick Moody, Mary Gaitskill, Michael Cunningham, and other novelists in an evening that also includes performances by Stephin Merritt, of the pop band Magnetic Fields, and Thurston Moore, of Sonic Youth. (Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. 533-2111.) ♦ Dec. 13 at 6:30: By Seamus Heaney, Anthony Hecht, Glyn Maxwell, Paul Muldoon, and Derek Walcott, from their translations of Joseph Brodsky's "Nativity Poems." (Peter B. Lewis Theatre, Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 88th St. For information about tickets, call 645-3346.) ♦ Dec. 18 at 7:30: By the poets David Lehman, Rachel Zucker, and Sarah Manguso, from their work. (Makor, 35 W. 67th St. 601-1000.)

**TALKS**
Dec. 12 at 8: The photographer Oistín MacBride, a native of Northern Ireland who has covered his homeland for the past twenty years, talks about his work. (Rocky Sullivan's, 129 Lexington Ave., between 28th and 29th Sts. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Dec. 14 at 7:30: Kate Weigand, the author of "Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation," offers her views on the history of the women's movement. (Brecht Forum, 122 W. 27th St., 10th floor. 242-4201.)

## BOOK CURRENTS

### *Gone to War*

In 1984, when he was nineteen, Vladislav Tamarov was drafted into the Soviet Army and flown to Uzbekistan for training. A few months later he was sweeping for land mines in Afghanistan. During the 621 days of his deployment (which he also tallies, obsessively, as 14,904 hours), he "shot at every shadow; everything that moved was a threat to us." Tamarov's journal of the war, reissued as **AFGHANISTAN: A RUSSIAN SOLDIER'S STORY** (Ten Speed) and translated from the Russian by Naomi Marcus and Marianne Clarke Trangen, includes his eerie camp-life photographs, and stands as both a personal chronicle and a protest against the war that left Tamarov with terrifying "Afghan dreams" of bullets ricocheting from rocky cliffs and of futile conversations with dead comrades. With no treatment available for post-traumatic-stress disorder, Tamarov spiralled upon his return from combat—in just two years, he married and divorced, became a break-dancer and a street-sweeper—before finding a sympathetic community among American veterans of the Vietnam War.



MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

"Theirs not to make reply, theirs not to reason why" describes the lot of the nine Englishmen the historian Philip Ziegler interviewed for **SOLDIERS: FIGHTING MEN'S LIVES, 1901-2001** (Knopf). One, who fought at Passchendaele, put it this way: "When I was in France I did what I was told I had to do and that was that. Where I was didn't interest me whatsoever." Through these veterans—pensioners at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, in London, a place of retirement for military men—Ziegler personalizes Britain's armed conflict. Stationed in places like Hong Kong, Libya, and the Cameroons, his subjects stood watch over the declining empire.

—*Dana Goodyear*

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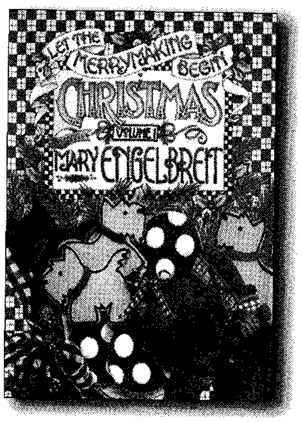
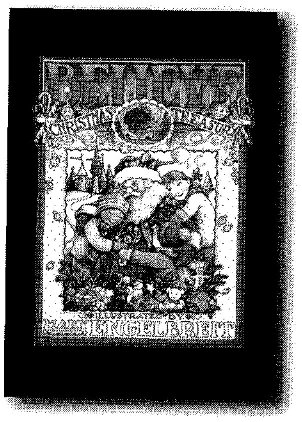

Let the Merrymaking Begin!
Christmas
Volume 1
Mary Engelbreit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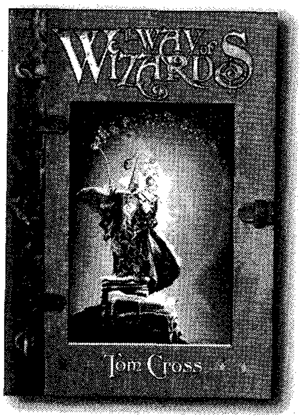
The Way of Wizards
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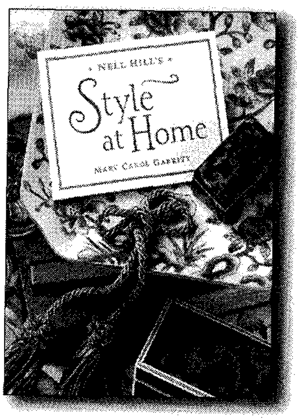
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### Nell Hill's Style at Home

*by Mary Carol Garrity*

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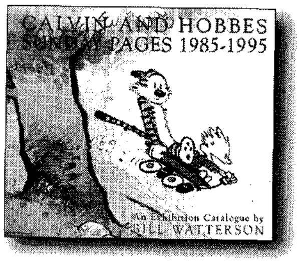
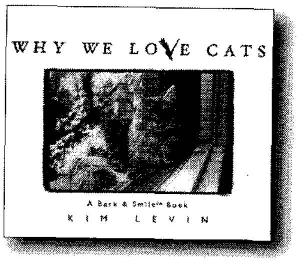

Calvin and Hobbes
Sunday Pages 1985-1995
An Exhibition Catalogue by
Bill Watterson


Why We Love Cats
A Bark & Smile Book
Kim Levin

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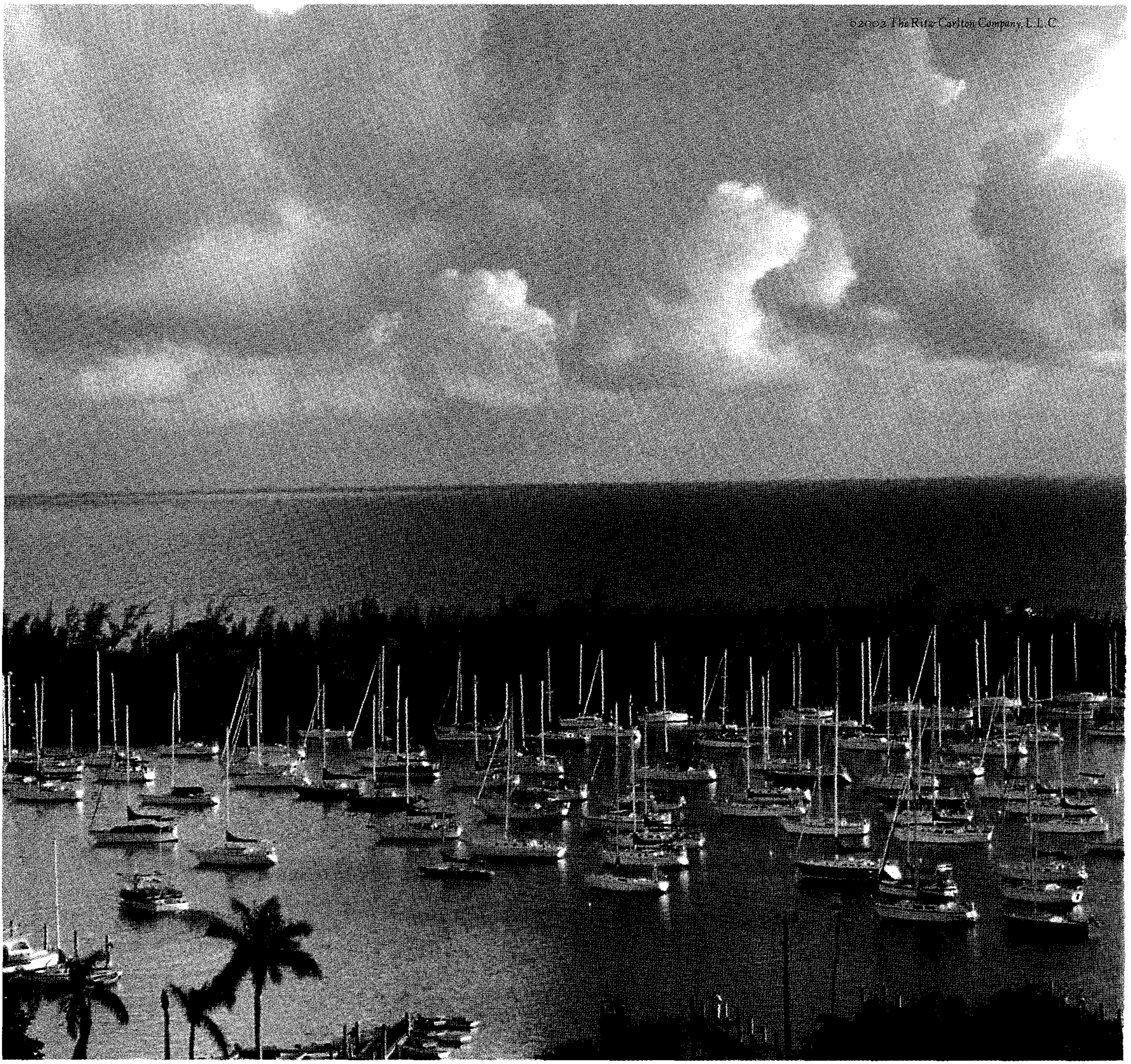

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**COMEDY, TRAGEDY, MELODRAMA, HIGH ART**
This year's Sarasota Opera season will highlight Verdi's "Le Trouvère," Donizetti's "Lucia di Lammermoor," Mozart's "Così fan tutte," and Strauss's "Ariadne auf Naxos."

# a cultural calendar

BY NAO HAUSER

Perhaps the best part of a Florida getaway is the chance to catch up on those enticing activities you never have enough time for at home. Like browsing an art show until the imaginations of the artists captivate your own. Or letting a jazz player's riffs burrow deep inside of you. Or giving in to the urge to sit through three film festival features in a row.

And yes, of course, there's the sun and the sea—that vibrant backdrop to a winter's worth of great cultural events. Outstanding among them will be the **Washington Mutual Coconut Grove Arts Festival** (February 16–18; 305-447-0401; www.coconutgroveartsfest.com). Set along the brick walkways of Coconut Grove—the Miami neighborhood known for its parks as well as its lively outdoor cafés—the festival will feature 336 artists selected from more than 1,200 international submissions. There's live entertainment, ethnic and regional food, and the inviting prospect of sitting with a latte and surveying the crowds.

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bars. And for seventy-five years, the **Coconut Grove Playhouse**, built as a movie palace in 1926, has been at its heart (305-442-4000; www.cgplayhouse.com). In its main theatre, see the Pulitzer Prize-winning "Proof" (January 29–February 24), and in the edgier Encore Room, laugh with the monologue of travails, "Metrano's Accidental Comedy" (through January 20th).

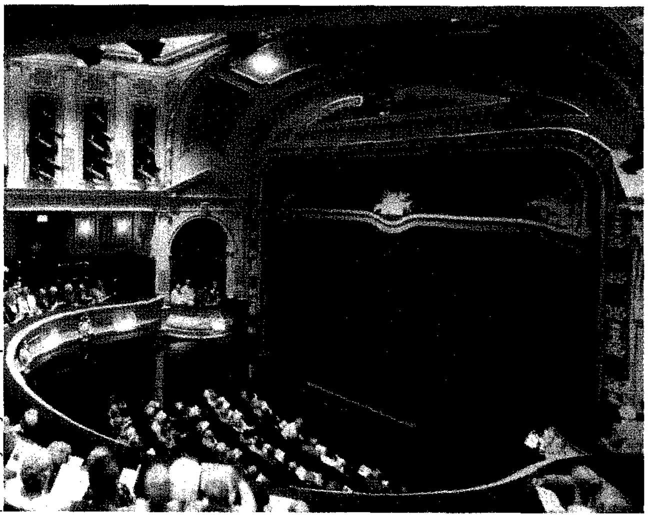

photo by Wayne Eastep

CELEBRATING THE ACTOR-ARTIST

At North America's only winter destination theatre festival, the Asolo Theatre Company performs in rotating repertory, enabling patrons to see up to five different plays in a single weekend.

"Once you're here, you don't ever want to leave the Grove," says playhouse spokesperson Love Ondusko-Levy. And as of next April, visitors won't have to, thanks to the opening of **The Ritz-Carlton, Coconut Grove** (800-241-3333; www.ritzcarlton.com). The 115-room boutique hotel pays homage to the neighborhood, taking its design inspiration from nearby Villa Vizcaya, the Italian Renaissance manse built by International Harvester veep James Deering in 1916. Marble floors, arched hallways, Venetian glass accents, a dramatic courtyard waterfall, as well as the ambitious beauty of the grounds, ensure that guests will experience the style and grace that Deering wanted for his own Biscayne Bay overlook. Personalized service ensures guests are warmly greeted and whisked past the reception desk to register in the comfort of their luxuriously appointed guest rooms, each with floor-to-ceiling windows and a private balcony.

The brilliant play of light along the Gold Coast—that incredible sparkle of sun on the water—makes the **Norton Museum of Art** (561-832-5196; www.norton.org) in West Palm Beach a perfect place to view a show of American Impressionists (through January 20th) that includes the luminous work of Mary Cassatt, Childe Hassam, and James McNeill Whistler. Next up are "Monks and Merchants: Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China" (February 9–April 21) and "Milton Avery: The Late Paintings" (February 16–April 14). At the city's **Raymond F. Kravis Center for the Performing Arts** (800-572-8471; www.kravis.org), the talent spectrum will range from the Pulitzer Prize-winning musical "Rent" (January 11–13), to an evening with the great soprano Renée Fleming

(February 6th). Symphony, chamber, and popular music are performed at one of the center's three theatres every week through April. The opening of **CityPlace** (561-366-1000), a $550 million-dollar complex, brought a wonderful choice of restaurants and aprés-theatre nightspots to the neighborhood. A new cultural center, known as **The Harriet**, short for the Harriet Himmel Gilman Theater, (561-835-1408; www.cityplaceweb.com) is a renovated 1926 Spanish Colonial-style landmark. The Harriet will rock New Year's Eve with a star-studded party inside the mansion and dancing outside on the plaza. Another West Palm gala: the January 10th preview party for the **Palm Beach Winter Antiques Show**, (January 11–13; 561-832-4164 for the sponsoring Historical Society) at the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

"It's not all about diamonds and yachts anymore; things have gotten lively in West Palm," says Kravis Center's Elizabeth Ragozzino. And the same holds true of Palm Beach's grande dame, **The Breakers** (888-BREAKERS; www.thebreakers.com), where a recent rejuvenation has added a twenty-thousand-square-foot indoor-outdoor spa and fitness center, updated their scenic Ocean Course links, and garnered a five-diamond rating for recently restored L'Escalier's modern French cuisine. And the magnificent Italian-Renaissance-style hotel with its towers patterned after the Villa Medici in Rome has aged gracefully, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Things are luminous in their own way up the coast in St. Augustine, where one million tiny white holiday lights strung around the four-hundred-year-old town will remain up until the end of January. That makes January 4th an especially great night for the city's monthly **Artwalk**—a self-guided tour of two dozen art galleries offering refreshments and live entertainment (904-824-2310; www.staugustinegalleries.com). Continue the romance a short drive north at the historic and luxurious 221-room **Ponte Vedra Inn & Club** (800-234-7842; www.pvresorts.com), a classic beachfront beauty with a celebrated golf course. At the less imposing, neighboring **Lodge & Club** (800-243-4304), guests have access to Ponte Vedra's great golf, tennis, and spa.

The magical light of the Florida Keys has inspired artists and writers from Audubon to Winslow Homer and Hemingway to Tennessee Williams. The mystique makes "Spirit of Place" an apt name for the upcoming annual **Key West Literary Seminar,** (January 17–20; 888-293-9291; www.keywestliteraryseminar.org), where Barry Lopez and Peter Matthiessen will deliver the keynotes and be joined by such luminaries as Carl Hiaasen and Annie Proulx. To peek into the town's architectural secrets, join the annual **Key West House and Garden Tours** (January 11–12,

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February 15–16, and March 8–9; 305-294-9501); you'll see five different houses on each tour, from romantic cigarmaker cottages to modern mansions. Browse the work of artists drawn to this scene at the **Old Island Days Art Festival** (February 23–24; 305-294-1241).

Key West's historic St. Paul's Church on Duval Street is the spirit-soothing setting for the thirtieth season of **Impromptu Concerts** (305-745-2283); come hear pianist Marina Lomazov (January 13) and the Gryphon Trio's chamber music (January 29). The 480-seat **Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center** in Key West (305-296-1520; www.keywesttheater.org) welcomes the Key West Symphony with Grammy-winning guitarist Sharon Isbin (February 1–2), and the multi-award-winning songwriter Stephen Schwartz will appear "with friends" (March 8). Check out other events, such as those at the Red Barn Theatre and the Waterfront Playhouse (www.keysarts.com).

Screen stars light up the anual **Sarasota Film Festival** (January 19–26; 941-364-9514; www.sarasotafilmfest.com). More than a hundred films will be shown, with the directors and many of the actors attending, and, as festival head Jody Kielbasa says, "the parties are as good as those at Cannes or Sundance." Opening night will be highlighted by a screening of "Door to Door," with its star, William H. Macy present, followed by a lavish reception at the bayfront Crosley Mansion. The Black Tie Tribute Dinner's Career Achievement Award will be presented to a film megastar on January 26th at the new waterfront Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota.

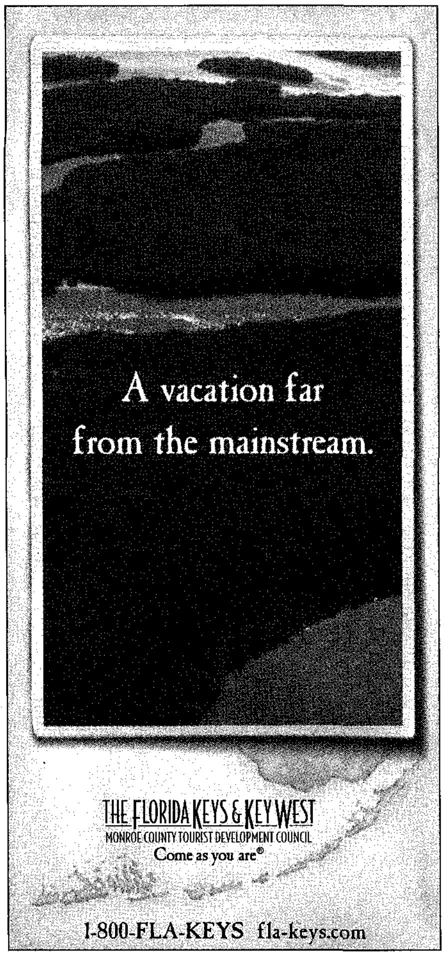
courtesy of The Ritz-Carlton

**ROOMS WITH A VIEW** The Ritz-Carlton, Coconut Grove is planning private sunset sails from nearby Dinner Key Marina, which will be seen from many of its rooms.

But then, Sarasota is star-studded all winter with opera singers and actors. Catch them in Verdi's "Le Trouvère" (February 2–March 23), "Così fan tutte" (February 16–March 16), as well as two other productions during **Sarasota Opera's** repertory season (888-673-7212; www.sarasotaopera.org), which launches with a gala on February 2nd. **The Asolo Theatre Festival** presents a dozen plays in repertory, and you can see a range of productions this season from Feydeau to Agatha Christie (800-361-8388; www.asolo.org).

The Asolo is just across the street from the West Galleries of **The Ringling Museum of Art** (941-351-1660; www.ringling.org), where "Images from the World Between: The Circus in 20th-Century America" (February 1–May 12) includes works by Alexander Calder, George Bellows, and Diane Arbus. So much to see there, you'll want to stay in town awhile—or at least until the **Sarasota Jazz Festival** (March 24–30; 941-366-1552; www.jazzclubsarasota.com), which is guaranteed to make the place swing even more than usual.

*Nao Hauser is a New York freelance writer.*



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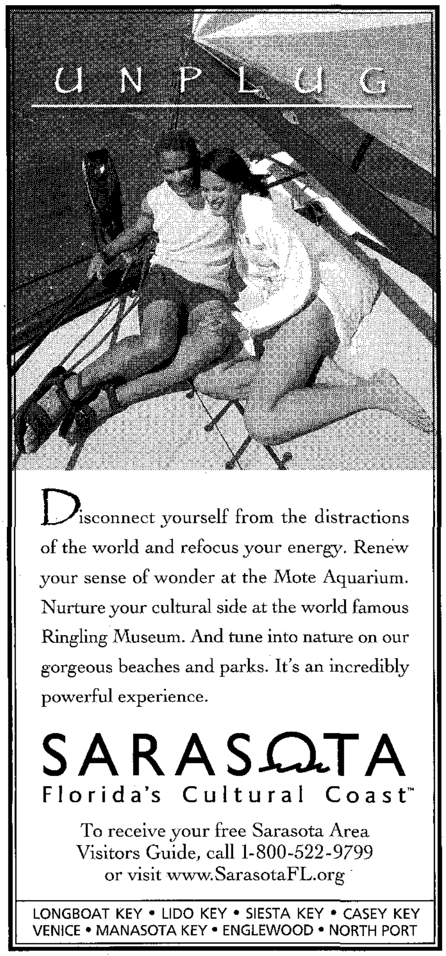

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# MOVIES OPENING

**IRIS**
Richard Eyre wrote and directed this dramatization of the life of Iris Murdoch. With Judi Dench, Jim Broadbent, Kate Winslet, and Hugh Bonneville. Opening Dec. 14.

**KANDAHAR**
Reviewed below in Film Notes. Opening Dec. 14.

**LANTANA**
A police detective (Anthony LaPaglia) investigates the disappearance of a psychiatrist, uncovering the secrets of seemingly disconnected people along the way. The cast includes Barbara Hershey, Geoffrey Rush, and Rachael Blake. Opening Dec. 14.

**NOT ANOTHER TEEN MOVIE**
Joel Gallen directed this spoof of "Clueless," "The Breakfast Club," "Bring It On," and other teen classics. Opening Dec. 14.

**THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS**
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Dec. 14.

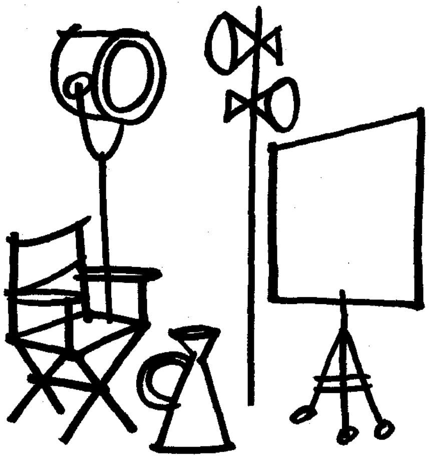
**VANILLA SKY**
The writer-director Cameron Crowe's thriller about a publishing executive (Tom Cruise) who becomes entangled in a mysterious love triangle. With Cameron Diaz, Penélope Cruz, Jason Lee, and Kurt Russell. Opening Dec. 14.

# FILM NOTES

**THE AFFAIR OF THE NECKLACE**
Visual hooey from the director Charles Shyer about an eighteenth-century French noblewoman (Hilary Swank) who attempts to lie her way to greater wealth. Swank's laborious performance (she's too naturalistic an actress for such haughty manners) and the ham-fisted dialogue (delivered, mysteriously, with an English accent) sink the film into the lush folds of bad costume drama. The cast includes Joely Richardson and Jonathan Pryce surrounded by sets of such museumlike stateliness that the actors seem afraid to touch anything.—*Bruce Diones* (Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.)

**AMÉLIE**
A waifish Parisienne discovers her mission in life: to bring unexpected happiness to others, and so to herself. Such is the story of Amélie (Audrey Tautou), and the simplicity of it—not to mention its dangerous surfeit of sweetness—appears to have touched a universal nerve. (In truth, the saga of the movie's success is more telling than anything in the movie itself.) Tautou is clearly a find, although one wonders what Mathieu Kassovitz, who plays the object of her affection, made of his role; it was Kassovitz who, in 1995, yanked French cinema up to date with his baring of ethnic hostilities in "La Haine." The Paris of this new movie lies at the other extreme, although what nags at you most is not the neighborly charm but the itchy, unsettled manner of the director, Jean-Pierre Jeunet. How far should we trust a plea for benevolence when it feels like a box of tricks? In French.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/5/01.) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Paris.)

**BEHIND ENEMY LINES**
The Irish director John Moore, who made his mark with flashy television commercials, takes those techniques and applies them to the ballistic speed of modern warfare. Sometimes the results are stunning, as in a sequence involving two persistent surface-to-air missiles; sometimes they are merely incoherent. The war in question is the Bosnian conflict, and, in a daring decision, the movie drops the comedic actor Owen Wilson into a situation worthy of John Rambo. His Navy plane has been shot down on a photo-recon flight over restricted territory, and an entire Serb battalion is looking for him. Wilson seems promising as a hyperverbal Holden Caulfield gone to war, but he's never given the opportunity to develop into an action antihero. The movie is equally one-dimensional: the NATO admiral is reduced to another villain with a bad accent and little respect for American-style justice. The Serbs, of course, are cannon fodder.—*Michael Agger* (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.)



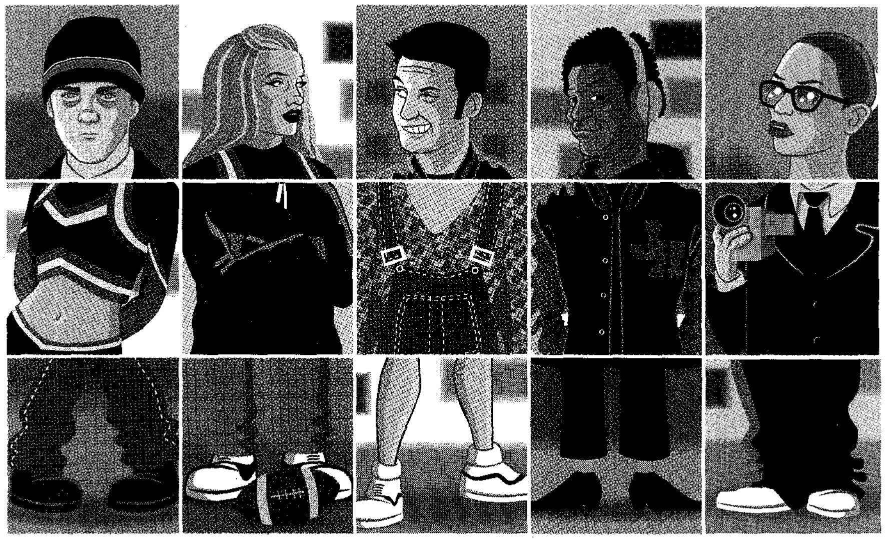
**THE BUSINESS OF STRANGERS**
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**CODE UNKNOWN**
A mosaic of stories, most of them disheartening. There is the occasional moment in Michael Haneke's film when the characters stumble upon pleasure, but it soon passes; as the title suggests, they have enough trouble establishing lines of communication among themselves. Anne (Juliette Binoche) is an actress whose relations with her lover (Thierry Nouvic) flicker from silence to tiff; Jean (Alexandre Hamidi) is a boy in baffled conflict with his father; Amadou (Ona Lu Yenke) is a young black teacher, arrested for trying to stand up for a beggar; and the beggar herself, Maria (Luminita Gheorghiu), is a Romanian immigrant crumpled with shame. Haneke cuts back and forth from one to the next with such skill, and with so little superfluous detail, that the effect is oddly bracing; his is not the portentous alienation of Antonioni, but the hard, topical distillation of ethnic strife—not of a Europe deep in thought, but of a Europe under fire. In French, with many of the characters speaking their native languages.—*A.L.* (12/3/01) (Quad Cinema.)

**HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE**
J. K. Rowling, having drawn even reluctant readers back to the lonely pleasure of a book, is now witnessing their dispersal. The movie is exactly what you would expect: spirited, efficient, glazed with effects, and almost servile in its fidelity to the novel. Harry is played by Daniel Radcliffe, who, though a touch too old for the part, fills it with unfazed amiability; more successful still, perhaps, are Emma Watson and Rupert Grint, enjoying themselves as his sidekicks. A roll call of British actors infests the staff at Hogwarts School: Richard Harris, Maggie Smith, and Alan Rickman, with the already well-built Robbie Coltrane finding fresh girth as the rumbustious Hagrid. The movie takes its time—the director, Chris Columbus, and his screenwriter, Steve Kloves, seem most interested in portraying good companionship—and yet the final half-hour feels rushed and unarousing. Even before the film opened, the grosses were assured, and yet, for all the magic—the broomsticks, the bank staffed by goblins, the troll in the bathroom—the work itself remains oddly unmagical.—*A.L.* (11/19/01) (Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

**HEIST**
David Mamet's debonair safecracking movie is high-grade fun all the way through. As Joe Moore, a steely but convivial Boston thief, the great Gene Hackman dispels the Mamet chill (the portentous and equivocal atmosphere of such films as "House of Games" and "The Spanish Prisoner"). Hackman, age seventy-one, sends waves of energy through the entire production. Mamet plays his usual games—the characters are always turning the tables on one another—but this time he's much more involved in the physical life of what he's showing us. The cast includes Rebecca Pidgeon as a hipster moll; Delroy Lindo as Hackman's loyal old friend; and Ricky Jay as a witty utility man who is so quick that he can, without preparation, throw himself in front of a moving car in order to divert the police. Only Sam Rockwell, as a young sleaze, is a disappointment.—*David Denby* (11/12/01) (Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

**IN THE BEDROOM**
In Camden, Maine, a twenty-one-year-old college student, Frank (Nick Stahl), is having a headlong summer affair with a local woman, Natalie (Marisa Tomei), who has two little boys. Natalie is separated from her husband (William Mapother), the loutish scion of a prominent local family. When the husband kills his rival, Frank's hypercivilized parents (Tom Wilkinson and Sissy Spacek) begin to consider vengeance as a way of saving themselves from destroying each other. This Sophoclean tale, fleshed out from an intriguing, elliptical short story by Andre Dubus, draws its strength from minute observation of settings, moods, and manners in Camden and from a gradual tightening of the winch. Much of it is very quiet (the first-time director, Todd Field,



*Opening December 14, "Not Another Teen Movie."*

MICHAEL WELDON

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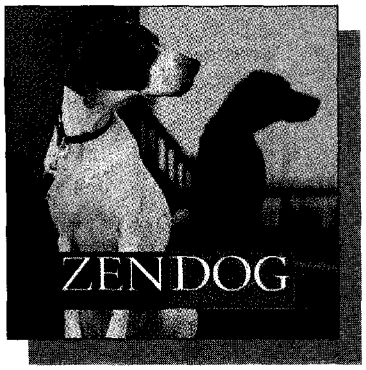

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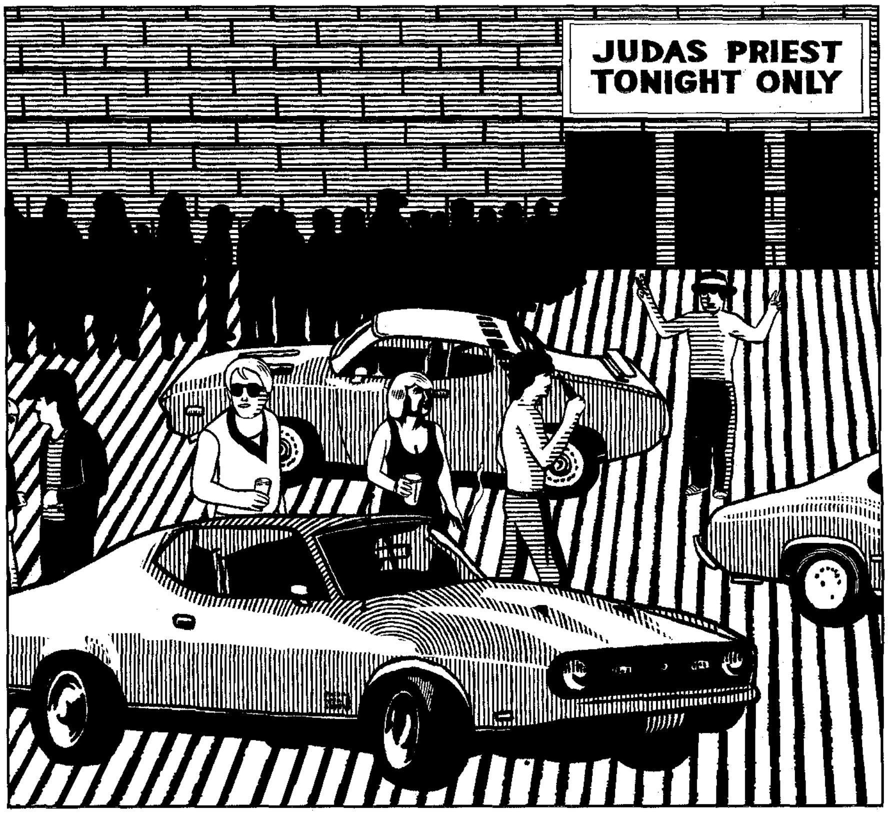
is an actor and a photographer), but when it explodes, the violence, both verbal and physical, actually means something.—*D.D.* (11/26/01) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**JUNG (WAR) IN THE LAND OF THE MUJAHEDDIN**
In this lacerating Italian documentary, Afghan men, women, and children living under the control of the Northern Alliance address the camera without hesitation or artifice—they have developed a genius for tirade, the art of defeated populations. Made by Fabrizio Lazzaretti, Alberto Vendemmiati, and Giuseppe Petitto, the documentary was shot in 1999 and 2000, during an earlier phase of the war between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban, and it chronicles the attempts of a Milanese surgeon, Gino Strada, to set up a decent hospital. Massive, bearded, and profane, Strada is the most persistent and humane hero in any recent movie, but one's interest is held most forcefully by the Afghans, particularly a prematurely aged woman, photographed through the prison-bar lattice opening of her burka. In Dari and Italian.—*D.D.* (11/26/01) (Cinema Village.)

**KANDAHAR**
The latest film by the Iranian director Mohsen Makhmalbaf couldn't be better timed. The story is just a series of gestures: Nafas (Nelofer Pazira), an Afghan woman who left her country as a teen-ager, returns to look for her suicidal sister. On the way to Kandahar (conceived as a state of mind as much as a place), Nafas runs into a variety of helpers disguising themselves to avoid persecution by the Taliban—men in burkas, a boy faking an inability to read the Koran, a benevolent African-American wearing a false beard. The sequences don't have much continuity, but Makhmalbaf turns the desolation of the country into scenes of iconic power. The repeated motif: flimsy new plastic and wooden legs made for the many who have lost their limbs to land mines. In Farsi and English.—*D.D.* (12/10/01) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

**THE LAST BOLSHEVIK**
A George Steiner aphorism near the start of the movie states "It is not the literal past that rules us, but images of the past," and Chris Marker goes on to refine that idea in this extraordinary 1992 documentary about the obscure Soviet director Alexander Medvedkin, who hung on to Leninist ideals as he tried to ply a stirring, skeptical art under Stalinist eyes. "How did you survive all of that?" is the mystery the movie confronts as a narrator reads six letters addressed rhetorically to Medvedkin, who died in 1989. Marker puts voice-over narration and interviews into a jazzy, contrapuntal relation to his bold visual assemblies; his montage moves on waves of thought and feeling, mixing wild propaganda with gritty pathos. In French.—*Michael Sragow* (Anthology Film Archives; Dec. 13-18.)

**THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE**
The latest Coen-brothers project is shot in smooth, glittering monochrome: a calmly told tale of murder without mayhem. We are on the brink of the nineteen-fifties, with its distinctive fears and badges of honor: Big Dave (James Gandolfini) can still lay claim to a good war record, while his wife, in all honesty, reports a visit from outer space. Billy Bob Thornton plays Ed, a barber living quietly with his wife (Frances McDormand) in northern California. He tries his hand at blackmail, and the plan misfires—justice catches up with him in the end, although, even then, he is the wrong man. Unfortunately, Thornton is so cool in the role that you simply don't believe that he would pass unnoticed. The whole film has the air of a clever, unthrilling conceit—a guided tour of film noir, without the sweat and compulsions of the real thing. With Tony Shalhoub, stealing the picture as a lawyer de-luxe.—*A.L.* (11/5/01) (BAM



PRIEST RULES! *In 1986, two friends, Jeff Krulik and John Heyn, borrowed a public-access camera and taped fans of Judas Priest getting loaded before a concert. The resulting fifteen-minute movie, "Heavy Metal Parking Lot," acquired a cult reputation as the most potent distillation of big hair, beloved Camaros, and inebriated metalheads ever captured on video. "HMPL" reaches a zenith of sorts this week at MOMA's "Documentary Fortnight," where it screens with its more charming sequel, "Harry Potter Parking Lot."*

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Village Theatre VII.)

**MONSTERS, INC.**

A thoroughly charming movie from the artists and storytellers at Pixar which wins you over with its jazzy, retro title sequence and then introduces the pun-filled world of Monstropolis, where creatures of all description toil in factories, collecting the screams of children. The visual invention is on par with Pixar's previous effort, "Toy Story 2," but the crazy quilt of cultural references and backdoor subversiveness of that movie gets toned down for something more sugary. John Goodman and Billy Crystal give voice to the two heroes, but the gold star goes to John Ratzenberger (Cliff from "Cheers") for his homespun Abominable Snowman.—*M.A.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3, East 86th Street Cinema, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

**OCEAN'S ELEVEN**

Steven Soderbergh's remake of the famously lazy Vegas heist movie from 1960 bristles with energy. Instead of the ineffably casual Rat Pack, Soderbergh has a cast of hardworking guys: George Clooney in the old Sinatra role as the criminal mastermind, Brad Pitt, Matt Damon, Don Cheadle, Andy Garcia, and, in colorful support, Elliott Gould and Carl Reiner. Soderbergh constructs the movie in layers with lines of terse dialogue winging on and off the screen and fitting perfectly together. The robbery itself also depends on many interlocking pieces of theatre—moments of imposture and fakery which allow the gang members to breach the inner sanctum of the casinos. Despite all the cleverness and good humor, however, the movie peters out, and, by the end, you may wonder what it's all for. With Julia Roberts in a senseless role as a magnificently dressed art expert who works as "curator" at the Bellagio.—*D.D.* (12/10/01) (84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

**SIDEWALKS OF NEW YORK**

The pits. Another derivative romantic comedy from writer/director/actor Ed Burns—this one co-starring Heather Graham—that fails to be either charming or funny. That the film inspires a longing for an early Woody Allen film only lessens the experience.—*B.D.* (East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

**SPY GAME**

Or, blond on blond. Robert Redford plays an old-school C.I.A. agent, a cynical, manipulative sort who harbors a rebellious, anti-bureaucratic streak. Brad Pitt is his protégé, a hotshot who disapproves of his boss's amorality. The movie is set in 1991, on the last day of Redford's career in the agency. Pitt has been arrested by the Chinese, and Michael Frost Beckner and David Arata's complicated screenplay lays out Redford's attempt to save him and intercuts it with flashbacks of their tortuous relationship as it unfolded in locales like Vietnam, Berlin, and Beirut. Tony Scott's visual panache, as always, obscures most of the issues raised by the script. The movie comes out against the callousness of using people for political ends while treating most of the people around the two gleaming stars as callously as possible.—*D.D.* (Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

**TROUBLE IN PARADISE**

Perhaps the most shimmering of the romantic-comedy collaborations of the director Ernst Lubitsch and the writer Samson Raphaelson, this film is a make-believe world of the thirties preserved intact. Herbert Marshall is so adept at the silky tricks written into his lines that he creates a hushed atmosphere. He plays a career jewel thief and, as his partner, Miriam Hopkins, quick and darting, always has her feelers out, along with her kittenish claws. These two are accomplished seducers, and in this 1932 movie witty seduction is indistinguishable from love itself. Kay Francis is the wealthy widow whose face takes on a yearning expression once she

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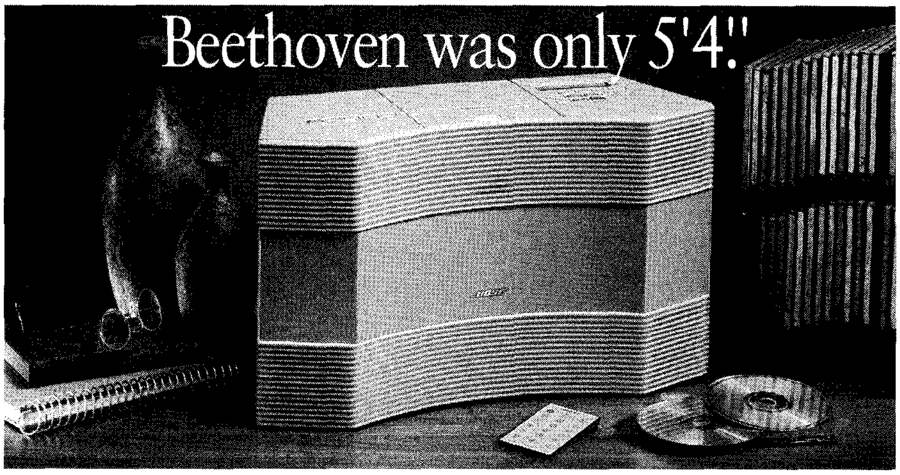

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sees Marshall; desire makes her warm and languid. The movie is full of suave maneuvers and magical switcheroos; it's perfection.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of Modern Art; Dec. 17.)

## ALSO PLAYING

**BARAN**
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
**B-52**
Film Forum.
**BOMBAY EUNUCH**
The Screening Room.
**THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE**
Angelika Film Center, Chelsea West, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
**FINAL**
Cinema 2 and The Screening Room.
**LIFE AS A HOUSE** (10/29/01)
Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Murray Hill Cinemas.
**MULHOLLAND DRIVE** (10/8/01)
Chelsea West and 59th Street East Cinema.
**NO MAN'S LAND**
Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.
**THE OTHERS** (8/13/01)
Eastside Playhouse, Empire 25, and Village East Cinemas.
**PIÑERO**
Union Square.
**TAPE**
Village East Cinemas.
**TREMBLING BEFORE G-D**
Film Forum.
**TUVALU**
Village East Cinemas.
**WAKING LIFE** (11/12/01)
First & 62nd Cinemas and Union Square.

## THEATRE ADDRESSES

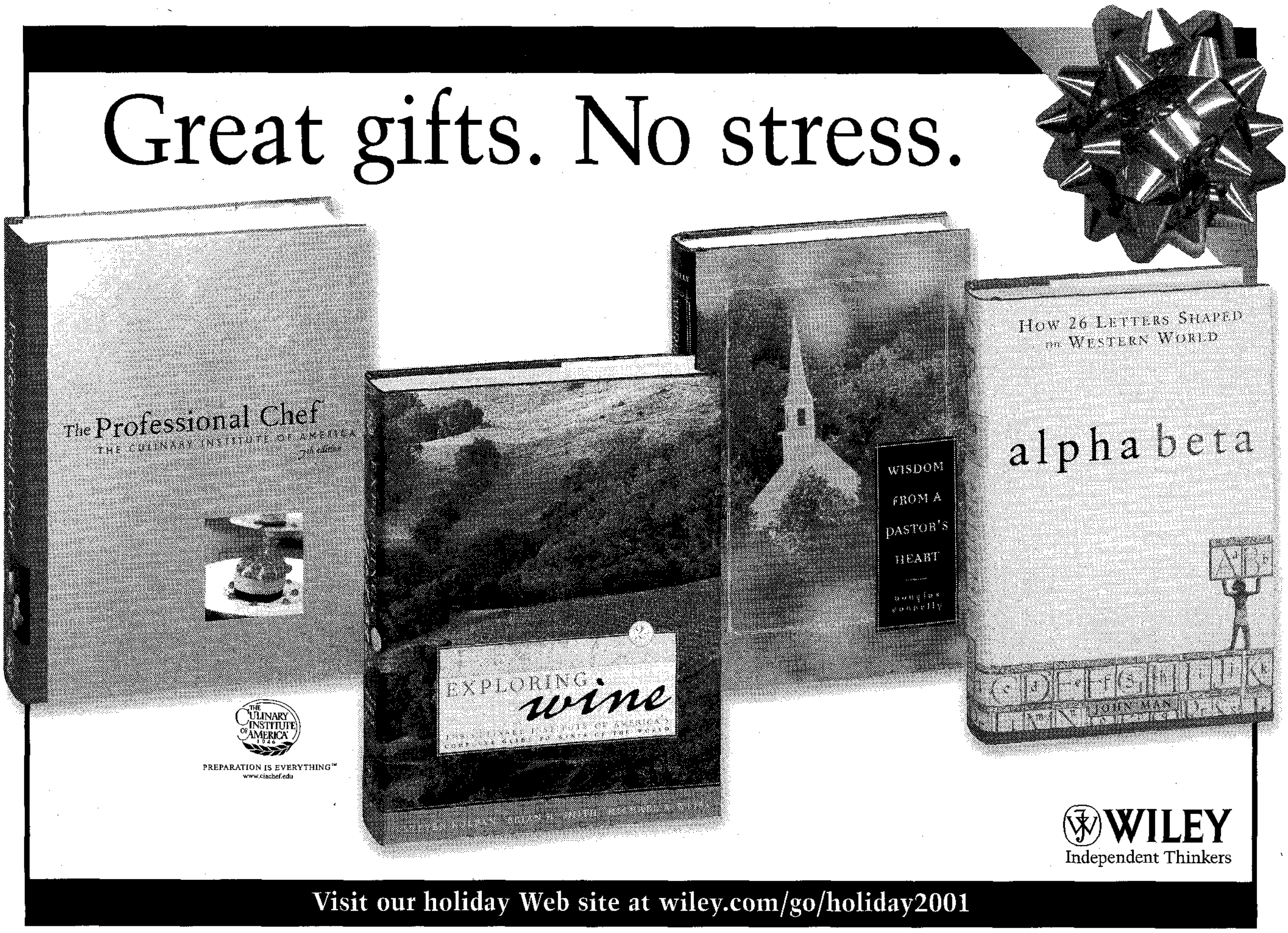
*Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.*

**Angelika Film Center,** 18 W. Houston St.
**Astor Plaza,** 44th St. at Broadway.
**BAM Rose Cinemas,** 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
**Beekman,** Second Ave. at 66th St.
**Chelsea Cinemas,** 260 W. 23rd St.
**Chelsea West,** 333 W. 23rd St.
**Cinemas 1, 2, and 3,** Third Ave. at 60th St.
**Cinema Village,** 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
**East 85th Street,** First Ave. at 85th St.
**East 86th Street Cinemas,** Third Ave. at 86th St.
**84th Street Sixplex,** Broadway at 84th St.
**Empire 25,** on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
**59th Street East Cinema,** 239 E. 59th St.
**Film Forum,** W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
**First & 62nd Cinemas,** 400 E. 62nd St.
**42nd Street E Walk,** 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
**Kips Bay Theatre,** Second Ave. at 32nd St.
**Lincoln Plaza Cinemas,** Broadway at 63rd St.
**Lincoln Square,** Broadway at 68th St.
**Metro Twin,** Broadway at 99th St.
**Murray Hill Cinemas,** 160 E. 34th St.
**New York Twin,** Second Ave. at 67th St.
**19th Street East 6,** Broadway at 19th St.
**Olympia I and II,** Broadway at 107th St.
**Orpheum VII,** Third Ave. at 86th St.
**Paris,** 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
**Park & 86th Street Cinemas,** 125 E. 86th St.
**Pioneer,** 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
**Quad Cinema,** 34 W. 13th St.
**The Screening Room,** 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
**72nd Street East,** Third Ave. at 71st St.
**64th and 2nd,** Second Ave. at 64th St.
**62nd & Broadway,** 62 W. 62nd St.
**State,** Broadway at 45th St.
**Sutton 1 and 2,** Third Ave. at 57th St.
**34th Street Theatre,** 312 W. 34th St.
**Union Square,** Broadway at 13th St.
**Village East Cinemas,** Second Ave. at 12th St.
**Village Theatre VII,** Third Ave. at 11th St.
**Walter Reade Theatre,** Lincoln Center (875-5600).
**Ziegfeld,** 141 W. 54th St.

## REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

*Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.*

**AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE**
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Dec. 18: "Master Class: The Art of Film Editing." All screenings are followed by a discussion with the film's editor. Dec. 15 at 1: "Reds" (1981, Warren Beatty); Dede Allen. ♦ Dec. 16 at 2: "Lenny" (1974, Bob Fosse); Alan Heim. ♦ Dec. 18 at 7: "The Sixth Sense" (1999, M. Night Shyamalan); Andrew Mondshein. ♦ Repertory nights. Dec. 15-16 at 6:30: "My Night at Maud's" (1969, Eric Rohmer; in French).
**ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES**
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Dec. 12-18 at 6:30: The U.S. première of Jonas Mekas's new film, "As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty" (2000). ♦ Dec. 13 at 7, Dec. 14 at 9, Dec. 15 at 2:30 and 7, Dec. 16 at 4:30 and 8:45, Dec. 17 at 7, and Dec. 18 at 8:45: "The Last Bolshevik" (†). ♦ Dec. 13 at 9:30, Dec. 14 at 7:15, Dec. 15 at 5:15 and 9:30, Dec. 16 at 2:45 and 7, Dec. 17 at 9:30, and Dec. 18 at 7: "One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevich" (1999, Chris Marker; in French).
**BAM ROSE CINEMAS**
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Dec. 12 at 6:30 and 9:20: "The Letter That Was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Never Sent" (1959, Mikhail Kalatozov; in Russian). ♦ Dec. 13 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Goodbye, Boys" (1964, Mikhail Kalik; in Russian). ♦ Dec. 14 at 4 and 8: "I Am Twenty" (1964, Marlen Khutsiev; in Russian). ♦ Dec. 15 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Wing Chun" (1994, Yuen Woo-Ping; in Cantonese). ♦ Dec. 16 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Once Upon a Time in China III" (1993, Tsui Hark; in Cantonese). ♦ Dec. 17 at 5 and 8: "Hamlet" (1964, Grigory Kozintsev; in Russian). ♦ Dec. 18 at 7:30 and 9:20: "Pirosmani" (1968, Georgy Shengelaya; in Russian).

**CINEMA CLASSICS**
332 E. 11th St. (677-5368)—Dec. 12: "The Grapes of Wrath" (1940, John Ford). ♦ Dec. 13-15: "The Magnificent Ambersons" (1942, Orson Welles). ♦ Dec. 16-17: "Notorious" (1946, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ Dec. 18: "Pickup on South Street" (1953, Samuel Fuller).

**FILM FORUM**
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Dec. 11-13 at 1:30, 3:10, 4:50, 6:30, 8:10, and 9:50: "Bay of Angels" (1963, Jacques Demy; in French). ♦ Through Feb. 7: "Greatest Hits." Dec. 14-15 at 3:20 and 7:35: "The Birds" (1963, Alfred Hitchcock). ♦ Dec. 14-15 at 1:15, 5:30, and 9:45: "Psycho" (1960, Hitchcock). ♦ Dec. 16-17 at 1:30 and 6:30: "Juliet of the Spirits" (1965, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ Dec. 16-17 at 4:10 and 9:10: "Nights of Cabiria" (1957, Fellini; in Italian). ♦ Dec. 18 at 1, 3:40, 6:30, and 9:20: "Brazil" (1985, Terry Gilliam).

**FLORENCE GOULD HALL**
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—A tribute to Jeanne Moreau. Dec. 18 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Bride Wore Black" (1968, François Truffaut; in French).

**GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM**
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (360-4321)—Through Jan. 11: "Brazil on Screen." All films are in Portuguese. Dec. 12 and Dec. 15 at 7: "The Two Faces of the Mountain" (1994, Sandra Werneck). ♦ Dec. 14 at 7 and Dec. 15 at 3: "Orfeu" (1999, Carlos Diegues).

**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Dec. 6-16: "Documentary Fortnight." Dec. 13 at 2:30: "Remote Sensing" (2001, Ursula Biemann). ♦ Dec. 13 at 6: "Little Giotto and the Giants" (2000, Mario Sesti). ♦ Dec. 14 at 3: "Ralph Bunche: An American Odyssey" (2000, William Greaves). ♦ Dec. 14 at 6: "The Fourth Dimension" (2001, Trinh T. Minh-Ha). ♦ Dec. 14 at 8:15: "Heavy Metal Parking Lot: 15th Anniversary Tour" (2001, Jeff Krulik and John Heyn). ♦ Dec. 15 at 2:30: "September 10th" (2001, Monika Bravo), "Turning Tragedy Into War" (2001, Paper Tiger Television), and "9.11" (2001, Independent Media Center). ♦ Dec. 15 at 5: "Navajo Boy" (1950, Rex Fleming) and "The Return of Navajo Boy" (2000, Jeff Spitz). ♦ Dec. 16 at 1: "Beneath the Veil" (2000-01, Saira Shah). ♦ Dec. 16 at 3: "My Journey My Islam" (1999, Kay Rasool). ♦ Dec. 16 at 5: "A Thousand and One Voices: The Music of Islam" (2001, Mahmoud Ben Mahmoud; in French and Arabic). ♦ A tribute to Alistair Cooke. Dec. 17 at 2:30 and 6: "The Mystery of the Leaping Fish" (1916, John Emerson) and "Trouble in Paradise" (†). ♦ Through Dec. 26: "A Wonderful Town: New York in Film." Dec. 18 at 2:30: "Auntie Mame" (1958, Morton DaCosta). ♦ Dec. 18 at 6: "Trick" (1999, Jim Fall).

**WALTER READE THEATRE**
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Dec. 27: "Spanish Cinema Now." All films are in Spanish. Dec. 12 at 1: "Welcome, Mr. Marshall!" (1952, Luis García Berlanga). ♦ Dec. 12 at 2:45 and Dec. 13 at 1 and 9:15: "Plácido" (1961, Berlanga). ♦ Dec. 14 at 2 and 6: "Anita Takes a Chance" (2001, Ventura Pons). ♦ Dec. 14 at 3:50 and 7:45: "No Shame" (2001, Joaquin Oristrell). ♦ Dec. 15 at 1 and Dec. 16 at 5: "Strangers to Themselves" (2001, José Luis López Linares and Javier Rioyo). ♦ Dec. 15 at 3 and Dec. 16 at 7: "Buñuel and King Solomon's Table" (2001, Carlos Saura). ♦ Dec. 15 at 5 and 9:30: "Visionaries" (2001, Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón). ♦ Dec. 15 at 7:15 and Dec. 16 at 9:15: "Madness of Love" (2001, Vicente Aranda). ♦ Dec. 18 at 1 and 9: "Luna's Game" (2001, Mónica Laguna).

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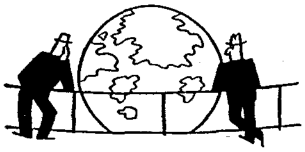
THE NEW YORKER

# THE TALK OF THE TOWN

## COMMENT
## FADE FROM BLACK

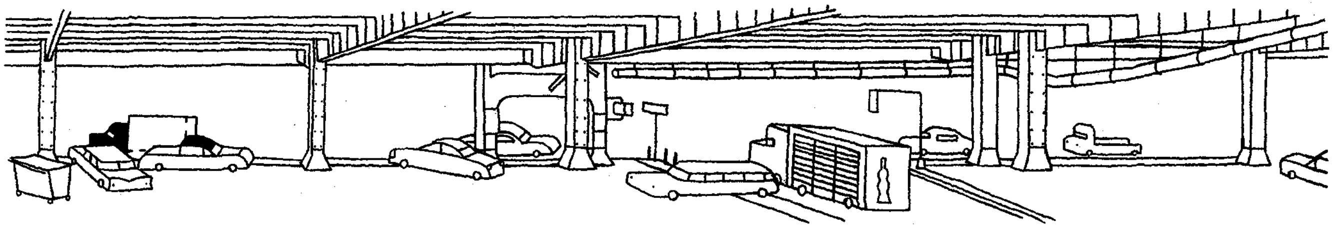


Last Wednesday morning, a Palestinian suicide bomber accidentally blew himself up in the middle of the mostly empty street in front of the David Citadel (ex-Hilton) Hotel, in Jerusalem. The proof that it was accidental—the timing and location, that is, not the explosion—was that nobody else was killed. Within a couple of hours, a grisly detail was making the E-mail rounds: the bomber's head had been found in a guest room. Front desk, please.

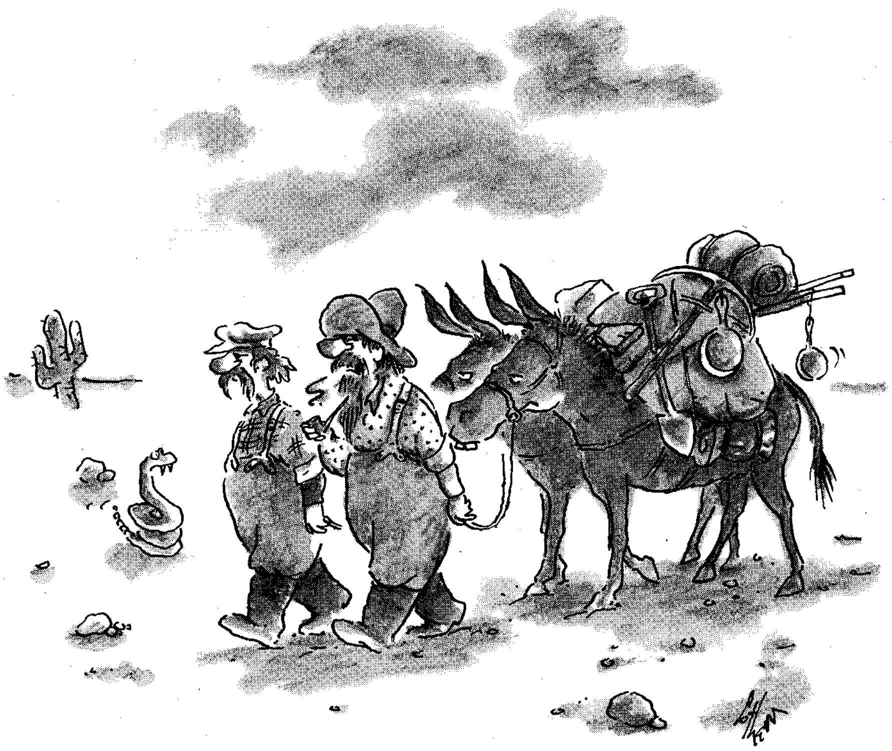
Black, black, black is the color of comic relief in the Middle East at the moment. And blacker still is the color of what it gives relief from. Four days before the explosion at the David Citadel, three Hamas suicide bombers killed twenty-five people—ten, all of them teen-agers, at a café-lined pedestrian mall in Jerusalem, and fifteen on a bus in Haifa. Three days before that, a suicide bomber killed three Israelis on a bus near Hadera, Israeli soldiers killed two Palestinians at one checkpoint, and a Palestinian killed an Israeli soldier at another. Two days before that, two Palestinian gunmen killed two Israelis at a bus station before being killed themselves. Four days before that, Israeli soldiers killed a fifteen-year-old Palestinian boy in a clash after the funeral of five Palestinian schoolboys who had been killed when a bomb planted by Israeli soldiers went off in Gaza. That same day, Mahmoud Abu Hanoud, the senior Hamas military commander in the West Bank, was killed as part of Israel's policy of trying to prevent terrorism via selective assassination. (To judge how well that policy has worked, see above.)

This is where the second intifada, which began soon after the failure of the Camp David talks at the close of the Clinton Presidency, has led; and this is where (one way or another, whether what follows is better or worse) it is ending. The violence has taken nearly a thousand lives—the equivalent, in proportion to the population of Israel and the Palestinian territories, of eight times the carnage of September 11th. Although the violence has taken the form of a cycle, as the journalistic cliché goes, it has not quite been symmetrical. Palestinians have instigated more of it, and they have suffered more from it. And, morally speaking, there has been a qualitative difference—something that even the most moderate Palestinian spokesmen refuse, on the whole, to admit. On the Op-Ed page of the *Times*, Ali Abunimah, of the Arab American Action Network, condemns "the targeting and killing of innocent civilians regardless of whether they are Israelis or Palestinians." It's a tired formula, and a dishonest one. Innocent Palestinian civilians, including children, have indeed been killed, often carelessly, and that is bad enough. But they have not been "targeted." For Hamas and Islamic Jihad, however, the killing of innocent Israeli civilians, including children, is deliberate, premeditated, and desired—a matter of pride, a religious duty, an occasion for celebration, even (given that the proclaimed goal of these organizations is the liquidation of the Jewish state) an end in itself.

For Yasir Arafat, issuing the usual statements, rounding up the usual sus-



LAURENT CILLUFFO



*"I'm going to California for the gold. I'm not into nation-building."*

pects, and engaging in the usual equivocations will no longer, it seems, provide the usual way out. His dilemma is made no easier by the fact that it is largely of his own creation. By failing to accept the Camp David offer—if not as the definitive agreement, then at least as a serious basis for serious further negotiations—Arafat brought about the ruin of Ehud Barak and the resurrection of Ariel Sharon. By unleashing the second intifada—fought not as the first had been, with rocks and Molotov cocktails, but with guns, mortars, and suicide bombers—he demoralized and marginalized the Israeli peace camp and turned Hamas into a force that threatens his own survival far more than it has ever threatened Israel's. Now he *must* behave decisively. He cannot do otherwise, because he faces a situation in which even inaction would be a form of decisive action, for it would guarantee that Sharon would either topple him directly or create the conditions for Hamas to finish the job. All Arafat's choices are bleak, but the least bleak, for him and for his suffering, despairing people, is to bet everything on an all-out effort, even at the risk of something like civil war, to destroy the ability of his Islamist opposition to commit mass murder against Israeli civilians.

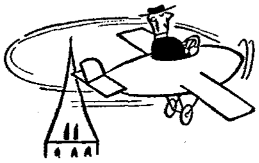
If Arafat gets serious about terrorism (and the signs so far are ambiguous but not wholly discouraging), then it will be Sharon's turn to do something hard, and the United States will have to insure that he does it. A freezing of the settlements—a real freeze, including an end to the highly unnatural "natural growth" of those that already exist—would be that something. The impact on the Palestinian mood would be large, the risk to Israel's security nonexistent. But a freeze would require Sharon to break with his right-wing constituency, and that, in turn, would require firm prodding from the Bush Administration.

What makes the conflict in the Middle East so maddening is that the solution is both so obvious and so difficult to get to. On the surface, all is lost. A big majority of the Israeli public thinks peace with Arafat is impossible and favors further violence against Palestinians; a big majority of the Palestinian public thinks peace with Sharon is impossible and favors further violence against Israelis. Yet, underneath that, silent majorities on both sides still long for a deal—the deal that was ninety-five per cent along at Camp David. Neither Arafat nor Sharon has the political will to make the necessary compromises; more important, neither the government of Israel nor the Palestinian Authority has the political capacity. Ultimately, the United States will have to substitute itself for those shortcomings and, in essence, force a settlement, providing an alibi for both sides to accept what would otherwise be unacceptable.

In the physics of relativity, an object under constant acceleration can reach, say, ninety-five per cent of the speed of light without trouble; above ninety-nine per cent, however, the object's mass begins to approach infinity, and so does the force needed to propel it farther. If there is ever to be peace in the Middle East, the United States will have to make it happen. You don't have to be Einstein to figure that out.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

## DEPT. OF SIMULATION
## CRASH PRACTICE



On the morning of September 11th, just about everybody who watched the unforgettable television shot of a Boeing 767 flying into the south tower of the World Trade Center shared certain feelings: shock, grief, anger, fear, and so on. But a large number of people had one additional reaction, which, unlike the others, hasn't got into the public discourse. That reaction was: "I've done that!"

One of the most venerable and widely used computer games, Microsoft Flight Simulator—which retails for fifty dollars—allows its users to take off from most of the world's major airports, in a variety of commercial and private aircraft, and to negotiate the climb to cruising altitude past the main landforms and skyscrapers of whatever city the airport serves. In New York, the World Trade Center is one of Flight Simulator's features, or was: on September 14th, Microsoft announced that the next edition of Flight Simulator will not include it. Part of the fun of Flight Simulator is that, in addition to simulating flight, it lets you crash, which has the peculiar appeal that comes from playing out a universal fear without consequence. (If you've spent any time at all around computer and video games, where "dying" is the coin of the realm, this will seem much less shocking and perverse than if you haven't.) You can crash into the runway, or you can crash into buildings, including the World Trade Center. You aim for one of the towers, it looms larger and larger through the cockpit window, finally filling it, and then there is a flash and the screen fades out.

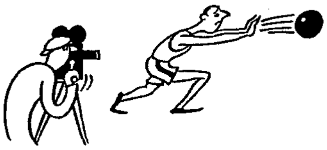
After the fall of Kabul, several of the Western journalists who toured the former Al Qaeda safe houses there noticed that in one of them there was a form from a Microsoft Flight Simulator package, indicating that some of the people simulating crashing into the World Trade Center may have been up to something more purposeful than thrill-seeking. Flight Simulator is a synecdoche of the personal-computer revolution and, more broadly, of the way in which the democratization of technology can be exploited by people who don't believe in technology. Pre-P.C., a flight simulator was an expensive, specialized piece of equipment available only to a small number of people under controlled conditions; now millions and millions of people have one that they can use whenever and however they want, and it isn't just a toy. Until recently, the opening page of Microsoft's Flight Simulator Web site proudly reported, "The U.S. Navy announces that Flight Simulator is now standard issue for all pilots in primary flight training and Navy R.O.T.C. units," and that is but the latest in a long string of encomiums to Flight Simulator's quality. You have only to encounter a professional flight simulator to see how little difference there is between it and the P.C. version.

Flight Simulator is a horse that can't be put back in the barn. Although Microsoft has posted a downloadable patch on the Flight Simulator Web site that removes the World Trade Center from existing versions, hackers on non-Microsoft flight-simulator Web sites have already posted a downloadable patch that restores the World Trade Center to the newly released Flight Simulator 2002. That may be tasteless and creepy, but at least it's not dangerous. The buildings that are still standard equipment on Flight Simulator, like the Sears Tower, are what could be of use to the bad guys. They don't need to practice crashing into the World Trade Center anymore.

—*Nicholas Lemann*

TOM BACHTELL

## ON MADISON AVENUE
## FIND CELL-PHONE GUY



Mountain Dew Code Red, the new, cherry-flavored soda from Pepsi, has—like regular Mountain Dew—lots of sugar, tons of caffeine, and a target demographic of young males. In particular, Code Red is being marketed to blacks, who, studies have shown, like cherry-flavored things, and to Hispanics, who apparently prefer beverages that are red. "Code Red is just really real," Bart Casabona, a Pepsi spokesman, said the other day. "We wanted to launch it with a reality-based ad campaign that would make customers relate to the experience the product offers." To that end, the company commissioned a television commercial for Code Red that would show the bewildered and excited reactions of a real-life crowd that forms when two professional basketball stars, Chris Webber and Tracy McGrady, wander unannounced onto the West Fourth Street Courts, in Greenwich Village, and join a pickup game, in what must surely be the greatest day in the history of unorganized basketball.

The stunt seemed to come off smoothly, according to Bill Bruce, the executive creative director at the ad firm B.B.D.O., who helped think up the idea for the commercial. "The hoops ad, which we call 'Hoops,' was like an F.B.I. operation," he said. "Ten people from the production company went down to the courts with hidden and handheld cameras. Certain of them were dressed like Con Ed guys. Webber and McGrady, they played three separate games with whoever was there, just to get the surprise element three times. Then, after each session, we sent production assistants onto the court with release forms for the bystanders to sign. We thought we got everybody there."

When Pepsi's executives viewed the final cut of the ad, they were particularly fond of a shot, about two seconds long, of a grinning spectator in a sweater-vest, hanging onto the fence as he gives a play-by-play into his cell phone—the ad's only dialogue. What he says is "Sean brings it up. He passes it to somebody who really don't got game." (It's unclear who Sean or the recipient of the pass might be.)

"It was one of those magic moments we dream of," Tyler Ricks, Pepsi's senior marketing manager for Code Red, said. "In particular, his commentary brought the energy and personality in the spot to another level. It was very real. But then B.B.D.O. brought up the fact that it didn't get a release from the cell-phone guy. Well, everybody at Pepsi, from top to bottom, was aligned that he should be

in the spot. We told B.B.D.O. to find the cell-phone guy."

Young staffers at the agency were dispatched to the playground in teams of three or four, a few hours at a time. "We brought a photo from the ad and kept asking everybody there, 'Do you know this guy?' " Lauren Radossich, a B.B.D.O. account director, said. "People recognized him, but apparently he wasn't a regular player. I felt like Magnum, P.I., if you will."

Then Radossich got a lead from a young man who thought the cell-phone guy looked like a friend's brother, somebody he believed was doing time at Rikers Island. "But there was nobody by that name at Rikers," she said. Anyhow, incarceration would have raised a new set of problems back at Pepsi. "Obviously, there was a possibility that the individual's sentence could outweigh what we're trying to achieve with the creative—even though he added a specific value that mirrored what we are introducing to the market," Casabona, the Pepsi spokesman, said. "Bottom line is, even without him in it, the ad keeps Code Red feeling real."

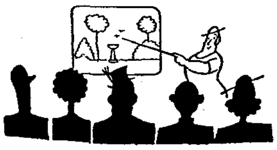
The search has been going on for several weeks. At one point, B.B.D.O. hired private investigators from the A. J. Sterling agency. "We tried the playground, the local merchants, your delis, your newsstands, hot-dog carts," said the chief investigator, a tall, thin man named Artie, who manages, with enough hair gel, to slick back a crewcut. "Problems. Because even if there are persons there who can make an identification, they don't believe you're not a cop, and they say they don't know him even if they do. And if you tell them, 'Look, the individual stands to gain remuneration for his appearance in the commercial,' then they really don't believe you." Artie's luck was no better. "The advertising people paid us a flat fee and said to call it a day, but I got a guy who works for me still looking whenever he's in the area. I figure it's good business, seeing as I don't like to close a case without a positive result."

The ad that is on the air now has had the cell-phone guy edited out. "We'd still like to get him in, if we could locate him," Bruce said. "He's got a great face. I hope he's not in jail. He seems like a really nice guy."

—*Eric Konigsberg*

## AT THE MUSEUMS

## STRAIGHTFORWARD PAINT



Mild gloating was in order last week at a small panel discussion at the Museum of Modern Art led by Laura Hoptman, the outgoing (in both senses of the word) assistant curator in the Department of Drawings. Hoptman has just left MOMA to take a job at the Carnegie Museum of Art, in Pittsburgh, where she will be in charge of the next edition, in 2004, of the Carnegie International, a big-deal exhibition. Her panelists at MOMA were the painters John Currin and Elizabeth Peyton, who figured in a show that Hoptman curated four years ago for MOMA's "Projects" series, which is devoted to new artists. Since then, Currin and Peyton have been recognized, not always with approval, for restoring the long-battered prestige of figurative painting in contemporary art.

"I sometimes wonder: Did I slay the stuff that I saw around me in the early nineties, or did it die on its own?" Currin said from the stage. He is a tall, angular, boyish Westerner, thirty-nine years old, and he accompanies bold remarks with humorous gestures that express dismay at his own temerity. He was talking about the politically militant conceptual and installational work that ruled the art-world roost a decade ago. At the time, his traditional-looking, acidly satirical paintings of big-breasted girls and middle-aged society dames led to his being accused of misogyny. His recent work includes still-lifes, interiors, nudes, and imaginary portraits in a considerable range of Old Master-ish styles. "Now I miss having the foil of that time," he went on. "For a shining moment, it was very easy to upset people without having to be Raskolnikov or anything."

Hoptman asked the pair, "Do you consider yourself rebels?"

"Yes," Currin answered with a shrug.

"I'm more sneaky," Peyton said. She is a shy, pixieish woman from Connecticut, thirty-six years old, and she was born with a two-fingered right hand. (Naturally right-handed, she paints as a southpaw.) She first became known for small, strangely enchanted paintings of historical heroes (Napoleon, for example) and rock stars (Elvis Presley, Kurt Cobain), rendered in colors as intense as nail polish. Her newer pictures depict mostly her boyfriend and other friends, and have a sweet, languid glamour. A review of her recent show in the *Times* started out deploring her overhyped reputation and ended up comparing her to Fra Angelico.

Hoptman, who is boisterously energetic in a muted way, like a rock station tuned low, recalled her excitement at discovering straightforward painters in her generation. "We all went to grad school in the eighties," she said later. "We were taught that there was nothing to believe in and that everything was suspect. If one made pictures, it had to be as critical commentary on the perfidy of images. John and Elizabeth changed that. They are painters of love. I wanted to be a curator in the way that they were artists, without private jokes, cynicism, jargon, and built-in critical attitude. One ran a risk of being called stupid and reactionary, but it was worth it."

The audience at the panel, which was sponsored by the museum's Friends of Contemporary Drawing group, included collectors, critics, dealers, and artists. (The painter Cecily Brown was there, as was the sculptor Rachel Feinstein, who is married to Currin.) Their questions were friendly. A woman asked the panelists what exhibitions had influenced them early in their careers. Currin said Gustave Courbet, and Peyton said John Singer Sargent. A man who announced that he was from California asked Peyton, "What makes a picture happen for you? Is it karma?"

She said, "I know what I am going to paint when I see something and I think, That's exactly what I want to see every second of the day." She also said she likes painting because "it captures time in a specific, beautiful way." She expressed doubt that it can ever be really popular. "I know this sounds like a cliché, but my work still feels a bit misunderstood. It probably seems really sentimental to some people. I don't feel any mass acceptance. I do want everybody to love my work. I want the dentist to love it."

—*Peter Schjeldahl*

## THE FINANCIAL PAGE
## DREXEL 2.0

Two years ago, Jeff Skilling, then the president of the energy-trading giant Enron, gave a talk at a conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico. During the heyday of the New Economy, there was a conference somewhere or other every week, but this one was remarkable, because, along with the usual suspects, the audience included dozens of scientists and academics, who sat rapt as Skilling proselytized. In his telling, Enron was not only embracing cutting-edge theories of business but actually making a lot of money doing so. When Skilling finished, the academics and theorists beamed. "Enron gets it," they told each other.

Enron got it, all right. In recent months, the company has suffered the most precipitous fall from grace in American business history. Under the weight of bad investments, mountainous debts, and worries over dubious accounting, the company's stock has plummeted from eighty-four dollars a share to sixty-six cents. On December 2nd, it filed for bankruptcy. Now Enron looks like the great and all-powerful Oz: small, full of bluster, cowering behind a curtain.

But Enron isn't Oz. It's Drexel Burnham Lambert 2.0. Drexel, of course, was the firm where the junk-bond guru Michael Milken plied his trade. During the nineteen-eighties, thanks to his visionary insights into the workings of capital markets, Drexel revolutionized Wall Street and became the most profitable investment bank in America. It also became the sketchiest investment bank in America. By 1990, Drexel was bankrupt and Milken was headed for jail.

Setting aside the jail part of the story—as yet, there has been no evidence of criminal behavior at Enron—the similarities between the two companies are striking. Both were upstarts in industries dominated by old-line establishment firms. Both built strong, immensely profitable businesses by moving into new markets that the old-line firms ignored. Both were acclaimed for their inventiveness. (Enron was named the most innovative company in America by *Fortune* six years in a row; Milken was called "a creative genius," a "wunderkind," and a "one-man revolution.") Both were emblematic of their respective eras, in substance and in style: Drexel popularized the iconic financial instrument of the eighties, the junk bond, while embodying the decade's most derided figure, the brash, corruptible corporate financier; Enron, in its rise, embraced the boundless promise and inscrutable accounting of the New Economy, and did so with the mooncalf optimism of the age. And, in time, both companies were spoiled by success and undone by hubris.

But, beyond all that, Drexel and Enron were proof that ideas mattered, that you could take something from the textbooks and turn it into profit. In Enron's case, the company began with a simple but radical idea: almost anything can be turned into a commodity, and then bought and sold on the open market. Commodities usually take familiar forms: they're crops, like wheat or coffee, or natural resources, like oil. Enron widened the definition to include things like electric power. Just as one bushel of wheat is like another bushel of wheat, one watt of electric power is like another watt of electric power. So, just as you could buy a contract guaranteeing you a thousand bushels at a given price at the beginning of March, Enron enabled companies to buy a contract guaranteeing, say, a thousand kilowatts at a given price at the end of July.

Enron didn't stop there. It expanded into a host of new markets, including bandwidth, credit risk, advertising space, weather derivatives, and paper. Everything that could conceivably be commodified and traded would be, and Enron, the innovator, would be there to take a cut of every trade.

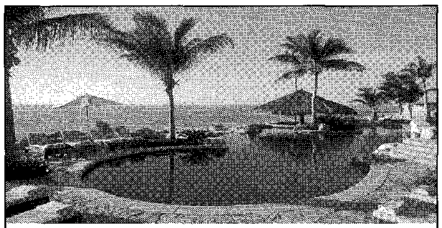
At Drexel, the pattern was similar. Milken started with a subversive idea: junk bonds weren't nearly as risky as investors thought. Drexel started by buying and selling junk bonds but soon widened its horizons. It began underwriting junk bonds, raising money for companies that historically would have been unable to gain access to the capital markets. Then it began underwriting junk bonds for leveraged buyouts and, later, for hostile takeovers. Once you accepted the initial premise—in this case, that the market was too conservative in evaluating risk—there was no limit to what you could do.

Or so Drexel and Enron thought. In fact, this illusion of limitless possibility is what destroyed them both. They overreached: they made questionable investments, cut corners, alienated customers, and attacked skeptics. As the first ones over the ridge, they wound up riddled with arrows.

So what does Drexel's demise tell us about Enron? Companies may die (or commit suicide), but ideas—if they're any good—survive. After Drexel failed, many on Wall Street assumed, and hoped, that junk bonds would disappear. But, after a couple of bad years, junk bonds took hold as an essential tool for up-and-coming companies looking to raise money, helping to fuel the economic growth of the last decade. In the end, Milken was right.

We can expect the same from Enron. In the wake of its bankruptcy filing, the predictable cries for increased regulation have filled the air. But Enron's ideas were sound and will eventually become commonplace: commodity markets really are the most powerful and efficient way to allocate electricity, bandwidth, or, for that matter, any kind of exposure to financial risk. The folks at Enron did get it. They just didn't know what to do with it.

—*James Surowiecki*



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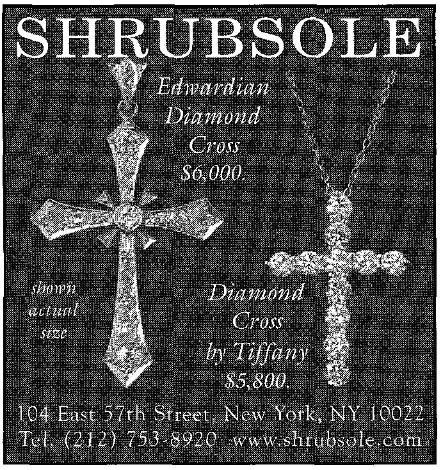

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THE WORLD OF BUSINESS

# WHEN WILL IT END?

*Recession and the bin Laden effect.*

BY JOHN CASSIDY

The Taliban may have just surrendered their final stronghold, but on Wall Street the victory party has been going on for some time. On Friday, September 21, 2001, ten days after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the Dow Jones Industrial Average closed at 8,235.81, its lowest level in almost three years, as investors reacted to fear and uncertainty by dumping stocks. During the following month, as the United States military began pounding targets in Afghanistan, stock prices recovered. On Tuesday, November 13th, the day Kabul fell to the Northern Alliance, the Dow broke 9,700. Three weeks later, on December 5th, it broke 10,000, and the Nasdaq closed above 2,000. The first bull market of the twenty-first century is under way.

The stock market's recovery has proceeded despite a series of reports confirming that, for the tenth time since the end of the Second World War, the United States economy is in recession. The Commerce Department estimates that the economy shrank at an annual rate of 1.1 per cent between July and September (thus ending the longest period of expansion in United States history). The Conference Board, a not-for-profit organization that tracks economic trends, says that consumer confidence has fallen to its lowest level in nearly eight years. And last week the Labor Department announced that the unemployment rate rose from 5.4 per cent in October to 5.7 per cent in November. (As recently as July, the unemployment rate was just 4.5 per cent.)

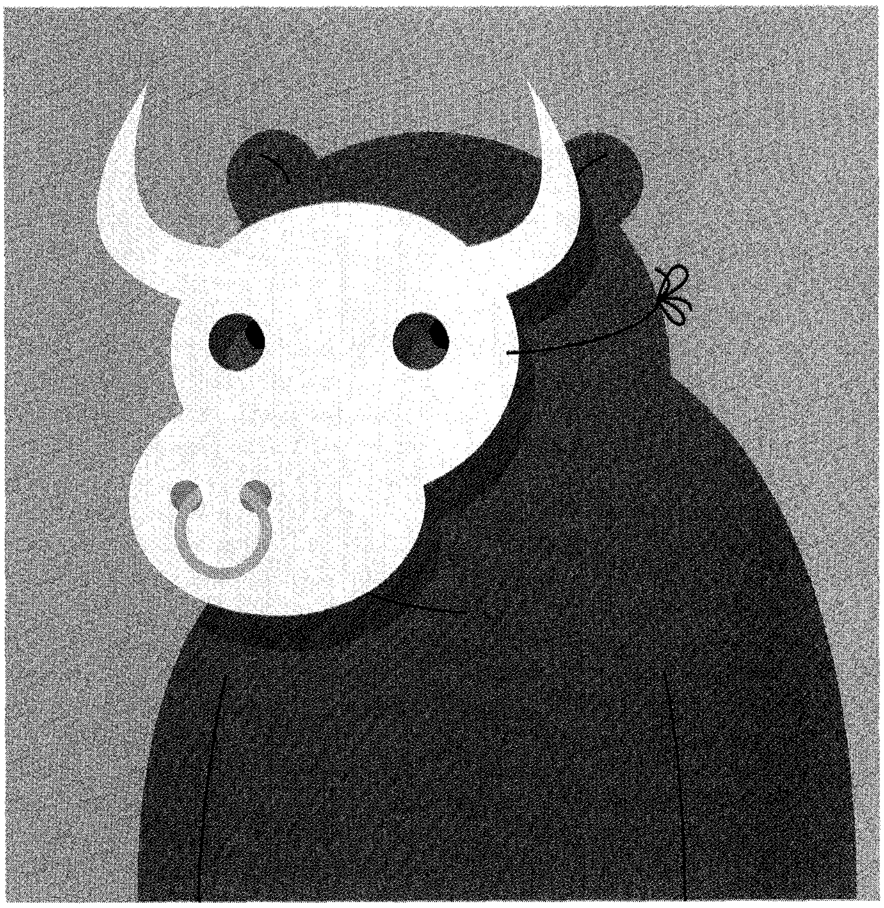
Investors, however, are looking beyond the current downturn, betting that twelve months hence the recession will be well behind us and corporate profits will be growing strongly. This is an optimistic view, but it is one shared by many leading economic-forecasting firms, as well as by economists at the White House and the Federal Reserve. When I spoke recently to Glenn Hubbard, the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, he told me that predictions of an economic recovery in the next few months were "very plausible." "The fourth quarter of this year is likely to be very severely affected," Hubbard argued. "But policies have already moved to mitigate some of the shocks, and others will dissipate during 2002." Hubbard said that the biggest threat to a rapid turnaround was the possibility of "consumers panicking" because of fears of terrorism and bioterrorism, but he saw little sign of this happening. After falling in September, consumer spending rebounded in October. Once we get beyond the next month or two, Hubbard believes, the total level of spending in the economy will hardly be affected at all by the terrorist attacks of September 11th; only its allocation will be different. "For example, people still may not want to fly on an airplane," he said. "But they may decide to do things closer to home instead, or buy a new couch or television."

The upbeat prognosis for the United States economy begs a lot of questions about the impact of the war on terrorism and the underlying state of American business. Just because the stock market is recovering doesn't mean that the rest of the economy is going to revive quickly. The current malaise didn't begin on September 11, 2001. It dates back to April, 2000, when the speculative bubble in Internet and technology stocks finally burst. Over the ensuing twelve months, first the technology sector, then the rest of manufacturing, and finally the entire economy started to contract—despite the efforts of Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, and his colleagues. Between January and August of this year, the Fed cut the federal-funds rate (the interest rate banks charge each other for overnight loans) seven times, but the economic slowdown worsened. According to the National Bureau of

Economic Research, the recession, defined as "a significant decline in activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months," began in March. The terrorist attacks made a bad situation worse, but they didn't initiate the decline.

The fact that the economy is facing two serious challenges simultaneously is what makes the outlook so uncertain. as the United States learned during the nineteen-thirties, and as Japan and much of Asia have learned more recently, modern economies can also spiral down.

Nobody can say for sure what will happen. In any given economic situation, there are a number of possible outcomes, or "equilibria," any one of which can get established and sustain itself.

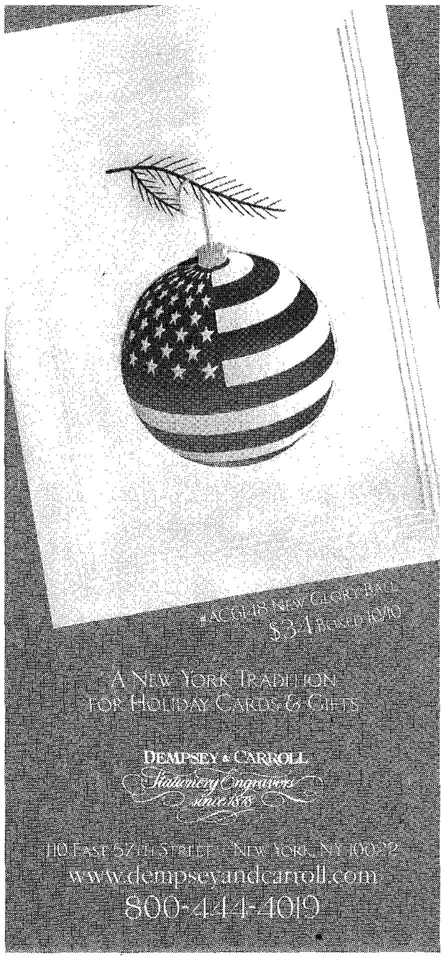


*Cutting rates won't work if firms refuse to invest and households hoard their money.*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Wall Street is assuming that the vanquishing of the Taliban will restore the nation's equipoise and thereby spark a revival in spending by businesses and consumers. That is certainly a possibility—something similar happened after the Gulf War—but it is hardly guaranteed, especially given the President's insistence that Afghanistan is only the first battle in a lengthy war. There is a serious danger that the aftereffects of the two negative shocks will interact and strengthen one another, resulting in a prolonged recession. If history teaches us anything, it is that economic cycles, once they get going, tend to reinforce themselves in all sorts of ways. During the late nineteen-nineties, the bootstrapping mechanism produced an unprecedented boom. But, While Wall Street is discounting the possibility that the country will get stuck in a recession equilibrium, this is more a matter of wishful thinking than of economic science.

Joel Prakken and Chris Varvares represent the optimistic school of thought. Their consulting firm, Macroeconomic Advisers, which is based in St. Louis, uses a computer model of the economy to produce a monthly forecast of gross domestic product, inflation, unemployment, and many other economic variables. Unlike most stargazers, Prakken and Varvares see their predictions taken seriously. Their clients include the President's Council of Economic Advisers, the Federal Reserve Board, and the De-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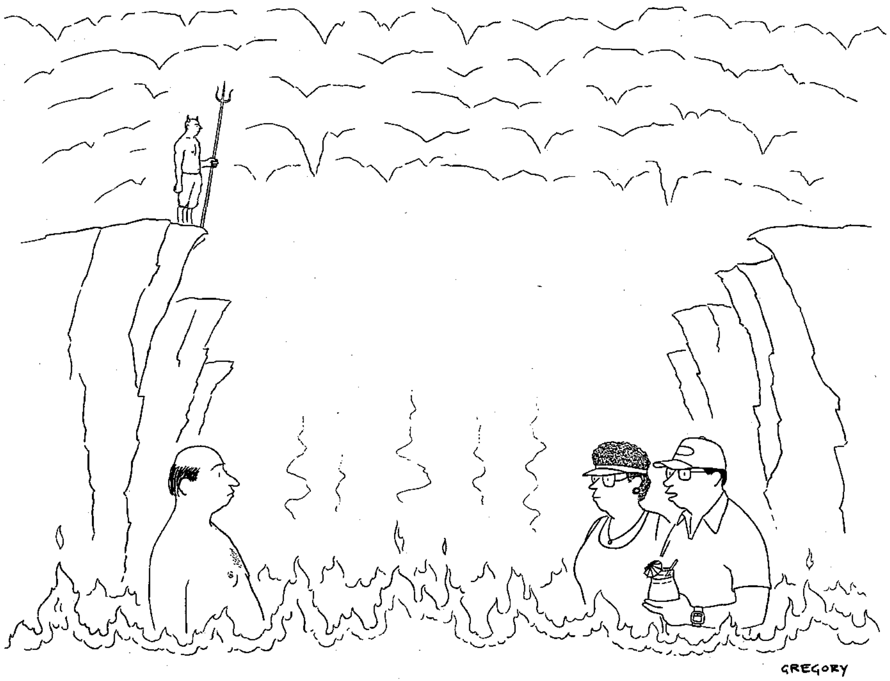
partment of the Treasury. For the past five and a half years, one of the firm's founders, Laurence Meyer, has been a governor of the Fed, where he sits on the committee that determines interest rates.

On the morning of Tuesday, September 11th, Prakken and Varvares were at the Marriott Hotel in the southwest corner of the World Trade Center, next to the south tower, attending the annual meeting of the National Association for Business Economics. After the first plane struck, Prakken rushed through the hotel lobby, where there was already some smoke, and crossed the West Side Highway, where he heard United Airlines Flight 175 approaching. Varvares was in his room on the Marriott's sixth floor, working on a presentation. After the plane smashed into the south tower, he fled down the stairs, escaping before most of the hotel was demolished.

Prakken and Varvares met up later that day in Madison, New Jersey, where a client of their firm lives. With the airports closed, the nearest rental car they could find was in Philadelphia. So, after spending the night in New Jersey, Varvares went to a local showroom and bought a Toyota Sequoia S.U.V., a model he'd been eying for some time. That afternoon, he and Prakken set off on the nine-hundred-mile drive to St. Louis. "We had the experience of being at Ground Zero and then travelling away from Ground Zero," Prakken told me. "Things in Youngstown, Ohio, seemed more normal than in Madison, New Jersey, which was a lot more normal than downtown Manhattan. That's a pretty good metaphor for the economic impact generally. The farther you get from Ground Zero in space and time, the more normal things seem."

On September 21st, Macroeconomic Advisers sent its clients a preliminary analysis of the post-attack situation, in which they sounded an upbeat note: "Increased uncertainty about the economic outlook does not necessarily imply a sharply negative turn in the economy, as some analysts seem to have concluded." The financial system had survived the attacks relatively unscathed. The Fed had reduced the federal-funds rate to three per cent; Congress had authorized forty billion dollars in new government spending; and there hadn't been any more terrorist atrocities. (This was before the first anthrax cases.) As for the stock market's swoon, history suggested that "such 'event-driven' declines tend to be short-lived and soon reversed." Prakken and Varvares said their "best guess" projection was for a modest economic contraction in the fourth quarter of this year, on top of the contraction in the third quarter, followed by a quick recovery in 2002. There were "downside risks" to this prediction, they conceded, but a "downward spiral" leading to a longer and deeper recession was "highly unlikely given the fiscal and monetary stimulus already in the pipeline."



*"Oh, we're just down here for the winter."*

When I arrived in St. Louis in October, Prakken and Varvares had just completed an updated forecast, which said that G.D.P. would fall a bit more steeply than they had originally thought, but recovery would be just as rapid. In the first and second quarters of 2002, G.D.P. would expand at an annual rate of 3.3 per cent and 4.9 per cent, respectively—healthy growth by any standard. "The underlying growth potential of the economy has not changed much, if at all," Prakken explained. "It's still a strong and vibrant economy. It's still the most flexible and versatile system in the world for allocating resources. I don't think there is any question we'll get an economic rebound. The only question is when."

In trying to answer this question, Prakken and Varvares had to make some assumptions. Macroeconomic Advisers' computer model, which Prakken, Varvares, and Meyer built during the early nineteen-eighties, contains more than six hundred economic variables. About four hundred and fifty of these variables, such as the levels of G.D.P., unemployment, and consumer spending, are determined by the model. The rest are "exogenous," which means that Prakken and Varvares have to choose values for them on the basis of knowledge and intuition. Important exogenous variables include the policy actions of Congress and the Fed, the level of the stock market, and the state of consumer confidence. When Congress cuts taxes, or the stock market rises, consumer spending tends to increase. If taxes rise or the stock market falls, spending tends to fall.

Given the uncertain environment following September 11th, Prakken and Varvares felt it necessary to consider a number of scenarios, each with a different set of assumptions attached. In the best case, there are no more terrorist attacks, policymakers move quickly to boost the economy, and the stock market and consumer confidence rebound in short order. In the worst case, further terrorist attacks are accompanied by a failure on the part of Congress to agree on a stimulus package, while the stock market and consumer confidence remain depressed. In constructing their baseline forecast, Prakken and Varvares relied on a middle scenario that they considered the most likely. It has the terrorists remaining inactive, policymakers responding rapidly, and the stock market and consumer confidence recovering gradually.

The combination of expansionary policies, including another congressional stimulus package of tax cuts and spending increases worth sixty billion dollars, and a gradual return to normal in the national psyche is what generates the recovery. Even in an economy where the G.D.P. is more than ten trillion dollars, sixty billion dollars is a considerable sum. Coming on top of the forty billion dollars in extra spending already authorized, and the sizable income-tax cuts that the Bush Administration enacted earlier this year, it would amount to the biggest relaxation in fiscal policy since the Reagan era. Firms and households with more money in their coffers will go out and spend more—at least, according to the model. Once businesses and consumers are both spending again, the economic revival will gain momentum, and Ground Zero will seem even farther away.

Prakken's distance metaphor is an appealing one, but is it accurate? Ever since the mid-nineteen-fifties, when the Nobel Prize-winning economist Lawrence Klein and his colleague Arthur Goldberger built a large-scale statistical model of the United States economy, at the University of Michigan, economic forecasters have had a spotty record. During the early nineteen-seventies, they failed to foresee the stagflation that culminated in the recession of 1973-75, the deepest slump since the Second World War. This time last year, most forecasters were predicting that the G.D.P. would grow by more than three per cent over the next twelve months. The actual growth will be closer to zero.

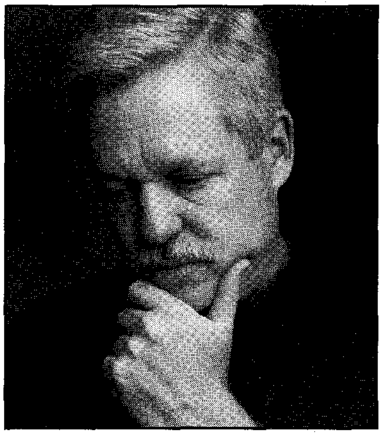
One reason forecasting models are so fallible is that they rely on the assumptions that the user plugs into them. Prakken and Varvares, along with many other optimists, are assuming that consumer confidence will recover steadily over the next few months. Maybe it will, but the opposite assumption is equally plausible. The main determinant of household sentiment is the state of the job market. With unemployment rising steeply, a further slide in consumer confidence seems at least as likely as an upward spike, whatever happens in Afghanistan. And if people feel less optimistic they are unlikely to spend more, which is a necessary condition for an economic recovery.

There is another, more fundamental problem with economic forecasting. The entire discipline is based on the proposition that, with sufficient statistical wizardry, the future can be extrapolated from the past. Forecasters like Prakken and Varvares use their computers to trawl through reams of data about historical spending patterns and generate a precise set of mathematical equations. Unfortunately, the precision is illusory, as Robert Lucas, a Nobel Prize-winning economist at the University of Chicago, pointed out in a famous paper published in the mid-seventies. When circumstances change, people's behavior tends to change, too, and what they did in the past is no longer a reliable guide to their future actions. Lucas was writing about changes in economic policy, but his argument applies equally to shifts in popular psychology, such as the ones induced by the collapse of the Nasdaq and the events of September 11th. In the aftermath of these shocks, there is no guarantee that American businesses and households will react to tax cuts and lower interest rates in the same way that they did in the past. And, if they don't, the policy measures that are being introduced will provide less of a fillip to the economy than the optimists are hoping for.

A tax rebate is meant to spur consumers to go out and shop, but anxious Americans are just as likely to save the money. Interest-rate cuts are supposed to encourage firms to borrow more money and invest it in extra capacity, but there is nothing to prevent them from refinancing existing debts instead and reducing their interest payments. Prakken and Varvares are forecasting that businesses will increase their spending on computer hardware and software at an annual rate of more than twenty per cent in the second half of 2002, which hardly seems realistic. Most technology firms, far from preparing to expand their production to meet rising

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

Sometimes telling a story is the only way to tell the truth.



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demand, are still scrapping the excess capacity they built up during the late nineteen-nineties.

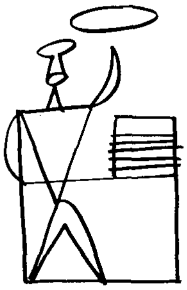
This is not an isolated example. Many businessmen, who are much closer to their customers than Prakken and Varvares, don't believe that they will be selling more products anytime soon. The auto sector is a case in point. Macroeconomic Advisers says that spending on motor vehicles and parts will rise at an annual rate of more than twenty per cent in the first quarter of 2002. To put it mildly, this is an optimistic projection. In August, a few weeks before the terrorist attacks, Ford cut between four and five thousand jobs, because of a sharp fall in demand for its products. On September 14th, it slashed its production plans again. Auto sales surged in October and November, but only because the carmakers had offered their customers zero-interest loans. When these incentives are removed, as they soon will be, sales will probably resume their decline.

To be fair, Prakken and Varvares don't claim to be omniscient. Prakken describes economic models as mainly "a vehicle for disciplining our thoughts." Varvares says that successful forecasting involves three elements: science, art, and luck. In a circular sent to Macroeconomic Advisers clients in October, they admitted, "Seldom has there been so much uncertainty surrounding our forecast." And they went on, "While we believe this month's baseline forecast is a reasonable and defensible projection based on our best thinking about all these risk factors, it is almost certain to change in ways that are not now predictable."

Uncertainty is at the heart of the current economic situation. In common parlance, to be uncertain is simply to be unsure about the future. To an economist, the word has a more precise and consequential meaning. The first economist to take uncertainty seriously was Frank Knight, who taught from 1928 to 1972 at the University of Chicago. During the interwar era, Knight was one of the most respected economists in America, but his reputation later waned, which was unfortunate, as he had some important insights about how capitalism works. In his 1921 book "Risk, Uncertainty, and Profit," which was based on a Cornell doctoral thesis, Knight distinguished between "risk" and "uncertainty." Risk, which Knight defined as "measurable uncertainty," is the sort of uncertainty that a casino gambler faces. In roulette, the probability of losing when betting on red or black is about 0.5. In everyday life, people face many types of risk, such as the threat of being laid off or of falling ill. These risks can be quantified, if only approximately. The chance of developing heart disease, for example, is related to diet and family history. In many cases, people can guard against the dangers they face by buying insurance, which spreads the risk over a larger population.

Knight defined true uncertainty as the doubt about the future which cannot be reduced to known probabilities and cannot be insured against. The chance of somebody inventing a cure for cancer in the next twenty years is one example of uncertainty. Since such an event is unique, Knight argued, it is not possible to compare it with enough similar events in the past to "form a basis for any inference of value about any real probability." The only way to evaluate such a probability is to hazard a guess, but the thinking that goes into such guesses is "obscure, a part of the scientifically unfathomable mystery of life and mind," and one can have little faith in its accuracy.

In business, uncertainty is endemic. Firms have to build factories and install machinery years before they find out how many items they can sell. If events take an unexpected turn, they can end up with too much capacity, or too little. Since prosperity depends on capital accumulation continuing, some way around this problem has to be found. According to Knight, the best solution is to remove investment decisions from the general population, which might be put off by uncertainty, and place them in the hands of people who like taking gambles: entrepreneurs. The profits these hardy venturers receive are their reward for shouldering uncertainty. Knight conceded that the economy would be in big trouble if the supply of willing entrepreneurs ever dried up, but he didn't consider this a serious danger.



John Maynard Keynes disagreed. In "The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money," which he published in 1936, Keynes spent a lot of space considering the implications of uncertainty. Keynes had trained as a mathematician, and his "Treatise on Probability," which appeared in 1921, covered some of the same theoretical issues that Knight addressed. Fifteen years later, Keynes's concerns were more practical: he was searching for a cure for the Great Depression, which had already dragged on for half a decade, thereby defying the tenets of classical economics, which said that economies always operate at, or close to, full employment.

According to conventional theory, firms treat uncertainty as risk. In deciding whether to pursue a particular business opportunity, they assign probabilities to each possible outcome and choose the investment plan that maximizes expected profits. Keynes argued that this sort of ultra-rational decision-making was impractical. The outstanding fact about business is the "extreme precariousness of the basis of knowledge" on which investment decisions were made. "If we speak frankly," Keynes wrote, "we have to admit that our basis of knowledge for estimating the yield ten years hence of a railway, a copper mine, a textile factory, the goodwill of a patent medicine, an Atlantic liner, a building in the City of London amounts to little and sometimes to nothing." Given these constraints, decisions to invest "can only be taken as a result of animal spirits—of a spontaneous urge to action rather than inaction, and not as the outcome of a weighted average of quantitative benefits multiplied by quantitative probabilities."

Keynes believed that great waves of optimism and pessimism are what drive major economic fluctuations. When businessmen are feeling excessively optimistic, as they were during the late nineteen-nineties, they will build more factories and expand capacity regardless of the business conditions, and all this investment will help keep the economy expanding. But when something happens to puncture the buoyant mood—a stock-market collapse, say, or a terrorist attack, or, worse, one following the other—the consequences can be calamitous. "If the animal spirits are dimmed and the spontaneous optimism falters, leaving us to depend on nothing but a mathematical expectation, enterprise will fade and die," Keynes noted, "though fears of loss may have a basis no more reasonable than hopes of profit had before." Businesses stop investing in plant and equipment. Consumers don't buy anything but the essentials. The normal processes of recovery fail to operate, and the economy gets stuck in a slump.

The only way to break out of such a bind, Keynes argued, is for the government to spend more money itself and provide strong incentives for others to spend. Cutting interest rates won't be enough to resuscitate the economy, because, whatever the rate, firms will refuse to borrow or invest, and households will hoard their money. In a situation like this, which Keynes referred to as a "liquidity trap," more drastic measures are called for. He suggested that it would even make sense for the government to bury banknotes in abandoned mines and have entrepreneurs employ people to dig them up.

*"No. 2, please step forward and shake your belly like a bowlful of jelly."*

• •

Since the monetarist revolution of the nineteen-seventies, which attempted to discredit activist economic policy, Keynes has been out of fashion in this country, but the current recession has sent economists scurrying for copies of "The General Theory." The federal-funds rate is at its lowest level since 1961, but there is still no sign of a pickup in business investment. This could simply be owing to the normal lags in monetary policy (interest-rate cuts always take some time to affect spending), but it could also mean that the United States is either in or approaching a liquidity trap.

A rare practicing economist who still describes himself as an unabashed Keynesian is Wynne Godley, a seventy-five-year-old former Cambridge University professor, who is now a distinguished scholar at the Jerome Levy Economics Institute of Bard College. After studying economics at Oxford in the nineteen-forties, Godley worked for the British Treasury, where he helped to prepare economic projections, many of which turned out to be mistaken. Godley has little faith in predictions of an imminent recovery, or in the conventional forecasting models that generate them, which he describes as "absolutely useless." He believes that it would take a massive stimulus package to turn the economy around—say, three hundred billion dollars a year in tax cuts or extra spending for five years, plus a comparable stimulus from fiscal expansion abroad. The measures currently being considered in Washington are less than half that size.

Godley isn't a familiar figure in the United States, but he is something of an expert in what can happen to an economy after a speculative bust. During the late nineteen-eighties, when Britain was enjoying a real-estate boom that in some ways prefigured America's Internet-stock boom, he issued a series of prescient warnings that the economy was becoming unhinged. In 1990, when Britain entered a deep recession that cost Margaret Thatcher her job as Prime Minister, Godley was vindicated. Since the end of 1997, he has been issuing similar warnings about the American economy. At the start of August, 2001, Godley and Alex Izurieta, his co-author, posted on the World Wide Web a paper entitled "As the Implosion Begins . . . ?," in which they said that the United States economy was probably already in a recession, and that it could turn out to be prolonged. In October, Godley and Izurieta issued an updated version of their paper, which took into account the events of September 11th. It began, "The United States should now be prepared for one of the deepest and most intractable recessions of the post-World War Two period."

I talked with Godley at his office in Annandale-on-Hudson, in Dutchess County. Speaking in the clipped tones of what used to be called the British establishment, he freely admitted that his economic views were "very, very unfashionable" and that he hadn't changed them in "a very, very long time." For many years, Godley headed the Cambridge Economic Policy Group, a haven for unreconstructed Keynesians. In 1982, the Thatcher government cut off funding for the group, after it repeatedly criticized Conservative policies. Godley retired from Cambridge in the early nineties and moved to the United States. He continued to work diligently, building his own small-scale model of the United States economy, but most of his articles "fell dead off the page," as he put it. Lately, however, Godley's views have attracted the attention of Wall Street. In July of this year, Goldman, Sachs published a respectful, though critical, review of his argument.

Godley believes that there are serious “structural imbalances” in the United States economy. In the boom years of the late nineteen-nineties, he points out, the private sector of the economy—firms and households—was spending a lot more than it was earning, financing the difference by borrowing on an increasing scale. According to Godley’s calculations, in the third quarter of 2000 the “private-sector deficit” reached 6.2 per cent of G.D.P., which meant that it was bigger than the federal budget deficits of the mid-nineteen-eighties. At some point, the private sector, like the public sector, has to spend within its means. Expenditure cannot rise relative to income indefinitely. If it did, businesses and consumers would eventually be unable to service their debts.

The problems begin when the private sector starts to cut back on spending and save more. Although this is what the economy needs in the long term, in the short term it can have a devastating effect unless other sources of demand—the government and foreigners—pick up the slack. Godley’s “implosion” began toward the end of last year, when, following the Nasdaq’s collapse, private-sector expenditure fell significantly relative to income. The corrective process was well under way on September 11th, but this doesn’t mean that that day’s events were unimportant. Godley believes that the terrorist attacks, because of their impact on the American mind-set, brought the recession forward from 2002 to 2001 and made it deeper. “Now people are in a mood that they are not willing to borrow,” he explained. “This is vitally important, because the whole economy has hitherto been sustained by high and rising borrowing.”

The current downturn won’t end, according to Godley, until the imbalances are corrected. “The entire expansion was based on an unsustainable foundation and will have to be completely unravelled,” he said. The private-sector deficit, although it has fallen this year, is still more than two per cent of G.D.P. Godley doesn’t have much time for short-term forecasting, which he terms “a mug’s game,” but he has used his model to work out how long it will take, given current policies, for the private-sector deficit to be eliminated. According to his calculations, the country is in a downward trend roughly equivalent to the one it experienced in the early nineteen-eighties, when the economy hardly grew for three years. The recession will probably last for at least another twelve months, given current policies, Godley said, and even when it ends the rebound will be so weak that unemployment will continue to rise. “There won’t be any automatic recovery, or quick recovery,” he insisted.

Godley could be described as an alarmist, but even some of the optimists are starting to sound more sombre. “The data that have come in since you were out here have been ugly,” Joel Prakken told me when I called him recently. He went on, “We still have the economy expanding in the first quarter of 2002, but the turnaround is not as sharp as it was.” Prakken said that he was particularly worried about the protracted haggling over the Bush Administration’s proposed tax cuts. “Our forecasts assume a pretty big fiscal stimulus in the first quarter of next year,” he said. “If that doesn’t happen in the magnitude or on the timetable we expect, it would delay the rebound.”

The economic statistics that Prakken was referring to suggest that overall business conditions are still deteriorating, despite some bright spots. According to the National Association of Purchasing Management report, the manufacturing sector has shrunk for sixteen months in a row. In former times, when manufacturing dominated the economy, this would have dragged the entire country into a deep slump. These days, manufacturing is dwarfed by service industries, which employ about four-fifths of the workforce. Unfortunately, there are signs that the service sector is also stumbling. During October and November, service firms cut two hundred and twenty-one thousand jobs, the biggest shedding on record for this sector. If bankers and real-estate agents start to feel the effects of the downturn, along with computer programmers, factory workers, and chambermaids, the recession could well feed on itself, with consequences that are difficult to predict. Once negative thinking takes hold of an economy, it can be just as powerful as the positive psychology of a boom.

Of course, the outcome of the war on terrorism will also affect the national mood. In the spring of 1991, after Saddam Hussein’s forces were routed from Kuwait, the stock market and consumer confidence both turned up sharply, and this was followed by a revival in spending by businesses and consumers. Something similar might happen again, but there is little sign of that so far, despite the defeat of the Taliban. Although retail spending has rebounded from its post-September 11th lows, most stores are having a disappointing holiday season, deep discounting notwithstanding. At Gap Inc., for example, same-store sales are down some twenty-five per cent from this time last year.

Even as the military campaign in Afghanistan appears to be ending quickly and triumphantly, the economy’s underlying problems will not go away. The economic imbalances that were created during the nineteen-nineties have nothing to do with Al Qaeda. The collapse in personal saving, the rise in corporate and personal debt, the soaring trade deficit, and the excess capacity in much of manufacturing are all self-imposed symptoms of a speculative binge. The hangovers from such binges take a long time to dissipate, as Britain, Japan, and many other countries have learned. The United States economy is in better shape now than Japan’s economy was in 1991, when it sank into a decade-long slump. The banking system is stronger, the fiscal outlook is better (despite the reappearance of budget deficits), and the business environment is more competitive. A Japanese-style ordeal remains unlikely, but an immediate and enduring recovery is also improbable, despite what Wall Street is saying.

Since 1945, recessions have lasted eleven months, on average. If this recession were typical, it would be due to end in February. Unfortunately, it is anything but typical. ♦

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### SHOUTS & MURMURS

# F.B.I. MAILBAG

### BY BRUCE McCALL

The Director's call for tips from regular, everyday American folks elicited 42,367 responses last week, of which—despite many staff vacation and sick days and the fax running out of paper—the Bureau has processed fourteen. Preliminary summary:

1. Man in Indianapolis reports "funny cooking smells" coming from nearby apartment. Could be couscous. Request warrant to enter next-door apartment and put glass against wall to check for sounds of Arab-type music.

2. Letter accidentally dropped behind file cabinet against wall. Recovery team due on-site 12/31/01.

3. Lady in Hell, Michigan, sent Polaroid of suspicious man riding camel near firehouse. Office copy of Rand McNally not yet located (no reason to suspect "inside job"), so cannot check if there is a Hell, Michigan. Hoax?

4. Man in Tucumcari, New Mexico, describes alien spacecraft landing in back yard, disgorging six men in full Scottish bagpiper regalia. Could be big break: Scottish bagpiper regalia perfect disguise for no-goods anxious to deflect suspicion. Checking with TV's "Unsolved Mysteries" for similar incidents involving Scottish bagpipers from spacecraft, put all Bureau offices on high alert. Suggestion: tell public not to worry but "something, somewhere" very wrong?

5. Anonymous postcard from Kobul (sp.?) says only "HORRIBL [sic] DETH [sic] TO INFIDLE [sic]." Not helpful. Request permission to save unusual postage stamp.

6. Lady in Denver claims she saw Osama bin Laden driving off the fifth tee at her country club. This connects with man in Colorado Springs who claimed he saw bin Laden at Rotary luncheon the same day. Plot being hatched to blow up Rocky Mountains? Requesting all Coloradans keep a lookout for turbaned men carrying dynamite.

7. Man in Lake Charles, Louisiana, says U.S.-based terrorist cells exchange info via messages written on dollar bills stuck in waistbands of belly dancers. Not actionable—see Agency Regulation A-106, forbidding agents to attend public entertainment events while on duty.

8. Letter from Boston financial-services firm offering free seminar on retirement planning at local Marriott. Link with this mission unclear. Will attend/Cannot attend card filed under Action Pending.

9. Could not read postmark on envelope from sixth-grade class enclosing thirty-one drawings of Bureau personnel as clowns, blind men, etc., so cannot acknowledge young America's desire to "pitch in." Forwarding sketch of Director as ostrich.

10. Odd-smelling shopping bag marked PLACE IN DIRECTOR'S OFFICE, DO NOT OPEN UNTIL JAN. 1, 2002. Deposited in Action Pending file.

11. Store clerk in Lincoln, Nebraska, reports "Lawrence of Arabia" overdue three weeks at his Blockbuster video store. Recalls renter as "slim and dark-complected," paid in cash. Estimates she was in her mid-eighties but very spry. Exciting lead.

12. Letter from Iraq (or Iran?), handwriting illegible. Could be foreign language. Will have local Berlitz school check it out at lunchtime.

13. Lady in Skaneateles, New York, asks if agency is aware of huge number of Afghan hounds resident in U.S., many without paperwork or licenses. Checking all airline passenger manifests from past twenty years to trace how they could have entered country unnoticed. Requested U.S. Customs be on lookout for Afghan, Pakistan, Hindustan hounds.

14. Secretary extracted letter lost behind file cabinet, using ruler. No solid information; some sort of religious rant? Signed "Osama bin Laden," same name as subject of investigation. Coincidence noted. ♦

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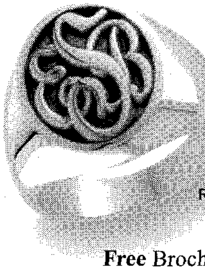

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PROFILES

# THE BEST PRETENDER

*Jim Carrey calms down.*

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

On a Wednesday morning in June, at a studio in Hollywood that has changed hands many times in its eighty-year history and is now known simply as the Lot, Jim Carrey is shooting a scene for his latest movie. "The Majestic" is set in Hollywood in 1951, against a backdrop of fear and suspicion and betrayal—not the usual, everyday fear and suspicion and betrayal associated with Hollywood but the kind embodied and engendered by the hearings that year of the House Un-American Activities Committee and the blacklist that they spawned. Carrey plays Peter Appleton, a B-movie screenwriter in his early thirties who goes along to get along until the day he falls under suspicion of having been a Communist and loses his job. Pete is then launched on a quest to find himself that is both spiritual and literal—he has a car accident the night he is fired, and when he comes to, in Lawson, a small town somewhere on the California coast, he has no idea who he is. The people of Lawson are still grieving over their losses in the Second World War; among the mourners is Harry Trimble, the owner of the local movie theatre—the Majestic—whose son, Luke, was declared missing and presumed dead a month after D Day. Pete bears a strong resemblance to Luke, and it is easy for Harry (played by Martin Landau) and the townspeople to convince themselves that he actually is Luke, miraculously alive after all these years. Pete himself is not so sure. At one point in the movie, a contemporary of Luke's, leery of this new local hero, says to him, "Who are you really?" Pete replies, "Just a guy trying to figure things out." Carrey, who will be forty in January, says of the movie, "It's about manhood. It's about *adult*hood."

On Stage 2 of the Lot is the set of the interior of the Majestic, and, like the movie theatres of the past, or, at least, like the movie theatres in movies that celebrate the movies of the past, it's a plush, inviting place, decorated in warm reds and umbers and styled with Deco-Egyptian motifs. Carrey moves back and forth between the lobby of the theatre, where this morning's scene is being shot, and a small room off to the side, where about ten assistants and technical people are sitting, along with the director, Frank Darabont, who watches the action on a small video monitor and plays back scenes for Carrey between takes. (As it happens, the video-assist system was created by none other than Jerry Lewis, to whom Carrey is often compared, and who has called Carrey "the best physical comedian to have come down the pike in a hundred years.") Darabont, whose work uniform consists of jeans, sneakers, and Hawaiianish flowered shirts, has an easygoing manner, and the atmosphere on the set is relaxed and friendly, even though the cast and crew have been working long days and nights since the beginning of March and Darabont is under a kind of pressure that is new to him: the release dates for his first two movies, "The Shawshank Redemption" and "The Green Mile," weren't locked in until he was well along in the editing process, whereas "The Majestic" 's release date is already set for December 21st. There are two weeks of filming left, and Darabont says, "I'm sort of at the forced-march part of the proceedings, so I just show up every day and get on to the next thing."

In the scene being shot this morning, which falls about two-thirds of the way through the movie, Pete—now called Luke—and Harry are presenting a pocket watch to the theatre's usher, as Luke's girlfriend and the candy lady look on. These being the days when people dressed well, Carrey is wearing a gray windowpane-check suit and a tie. (Carrey, who is six feet two and handsome in an old-fashioned leading-man way, looks good in clothes, and he looks good

*"I pray for wisdom, and when you pray for wisdom you get your ass kicked," Carrey says. Photograph by Mary Ellen Mark.*

out of clothes: see the 1995 *Rolling Stone* cover that replicates the famous Coppertone ad, showing Carrey in side view, caught in a posture of mock alarm as a dog pulls down his bathing suit.) Not much is required of him in this scene; the moment belongs to Emmett, the usher, played by Gerry Black, to whom the watch has great symbolic value. Between takes, the talk is of details: lighting, the positioning of the actors, bits of business. Laurie Holden, who plays Luke's girlfriend, says to Carrey, "Jim, can you kind of grab my hand just a millisecond sooner?"

Larry Moss, a director and actor who is Carrey's acting coach for this movie, comes in after the fourth take, and Carrey informs him cheerfully, "I'm on the upswing of manic-depressive." You'd never know it; much to the disappointment of some twelve-year-olds of my acquaintance, who were in awe that I had met their god, Carrey never becomes antic on the set. Unlike Ace Ventura, the pet detective he played in 1994, in his first big movie, he talks only out of his mouth. For this movie, Carrey has not had to go through the physical trials that he endured while making "Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas"—wearing a hot, rubber-and-yak-fur costume and painful contact lenses—and he has not gone AWOL into his character, the way he did during the four months of filming "Man on the Moon," when he "became" Andy Kaufman and would not answer to "Jim" except on weekends, when his daughter, who was then eleven, was staying with him. (Milos Forman, the director of "Man on the Moon," came to enjoy the game of dealing with this "troublemaker," as Carrey called his Kaufman alter ego, and when Forman had twins, in 1998, he named them Jim and Andy.) Every once in a while, Carrey will engage in a little moment of actorly fun, such as when Holden came into the office after a take and said, "I've got to pull up my girdle," and Carrey, pretending to be put out by the delay, shouted, "Oh, for God's sake!" But, for the most part, he keeps to himself between takes. Occasionally, he'll say a few words to Landau—today is Landau's last day of filming—and sometimes he'll read for a few minutes (he has a copy of Emerson's essays with him) or pace and vocalize, making noises like "Boom whoo-ee oya mmmmm ah ah ah ah" and "Doodle oodle doo doo" and "La la la la hum hm hm hm *hoo*-ah." Carrey himself later remarked on his regular-guyness. "People are shocked when they meet me, because they expect me to be some wired guy who's always on and trying to score," he said. "And I'm not at all. I learned early on I don't want to be that guy who's just sitting watching

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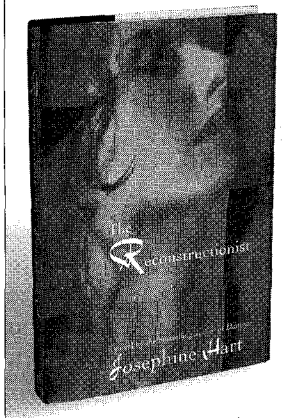

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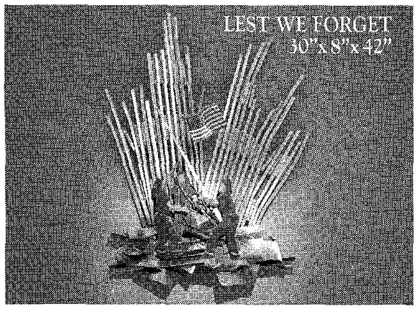

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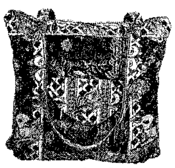

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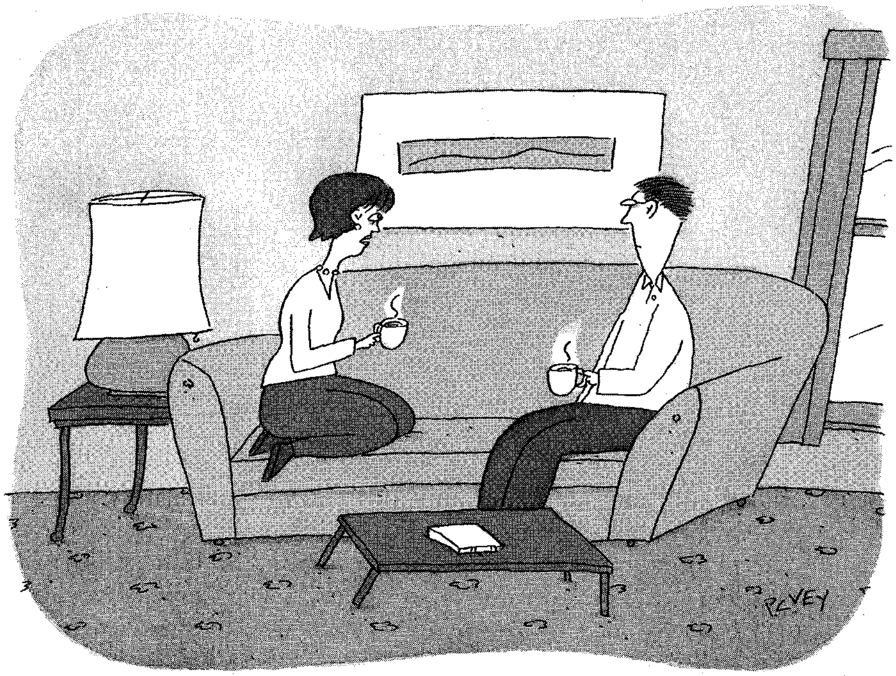
other people have real connections and real conversations and waiting for his chance to say something funny. I think that’s so incredibly sad, because you never ever get really involved. I probably recognize it because I *was* it, at a certain point.”

In Darabont’s two earlier films, there are important scenes in which characters watch iconic old movies—“Gilda” in “The Shawshank Redemption” and “Top Hat” in “The Green Mile”—and “The Majestic” is even more steeped in movie lore and movie love. Still, the new film marks a departure for Darabont—the others were both, coincidentally, set in prisons and based on Stephen King stories, whereas this one is an emotionally direct, straight-down-the-middle Hollywood drama to which the word “Capra-esque” has clung since before shooting even began. On Stage 2, across the street from the Majestic is a row of storefronts, one of them bearing the words “Bailey’s Savings and Loan”—a reference, of course, to George Bailey, the character Jimmy Stewart played in Capra’s “It’s a Wonderful Life.” At lunch in the Lot’s commissary that day, I asked Michael Sloane, the screenwriter, and a friend of Darabont’s since they attended Hollywood High School, back in the seventies, whether he’d had anybody particular in mind when he wrote the screenplay, and he said, “Yeah—Jimmy Stewart, Carole Lombard, and Henry Travers.”

The film is also a departure for Carrey, who, although he has played dramatic roles before, made his name and his fortune by getting people to laugh at him for being, to use his term, “balls-out funny”—aggressively infantile and gleefully uninhibited. But the role he plays in “The Majestic” isn’t necessarily that much of a stretch from the roles he played in “Dumb & Dumber,” “The Mask,” “Ace Ventura: Pet Detective,” and “Liar Liar,” the movie that established Carrey’s credibility as a romantic-comedy lead. People have pointed out that Carrey occupies so much space on the screen that you never think of him as having co-stars, but that aloneness, that singularity, is part of what makes his characters funny, because it’s what makes them touching. In his silliness, there is great vulnerability. (Not everyone finds Carrey’s one-man band irresistible. There are those who respond to him as though he were sitting too close to them on a bus, naked, singing loudly to himself in a foreign language, while juggling open containers of hot liquid. They just want him to go away, *now*.) Still, playing this part has forced him to find less showy ways to get an audience’s attention, and making “The Majestic,” he says, has been “a journey of stripping the tricks away.” “A lot of comics have taken their pain and turned it into funny,” Landau,



*“I’d feel safer if you were an ex-marine with a gun collection.”*

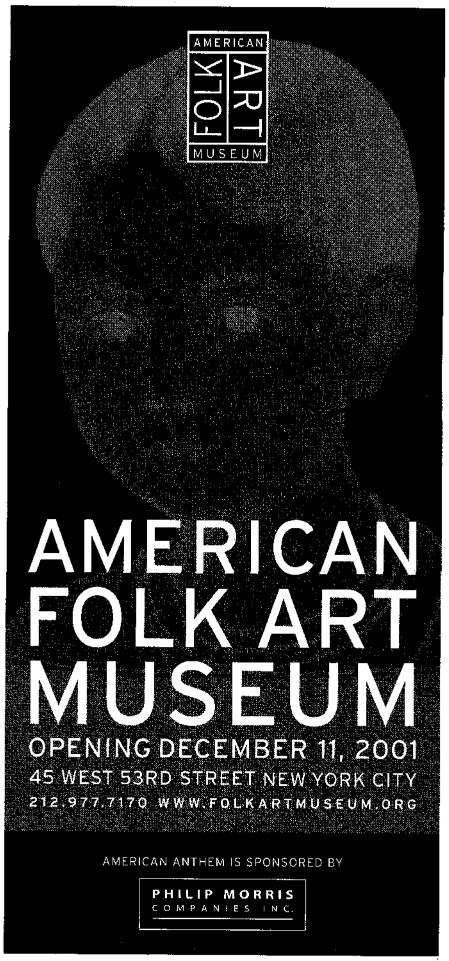
who has been teaching acting for decades (he co-runs the Actors Studio in Los Angeles), told me. "There's no room for that here. He has to embrace it. He can't hide behind it. As he said in the beginning, 'It's scary, because it's like my own feelings sticking out.' "

" 'The Truman Show' was reality," Carrey added a few days later. "But I still played a guy who put on a persona to go outside, you know, and I really was looking forward to doing something at sea level. To just *be* on camera. And that's the hardest thing in the world—not to try to make something happen." On the set, he says, "I've been a bit of a control freak. When I did 'The Mask,' I knew every move I was going to make. If you do that, there's nothing organic going on. It can be entertaining and fun, but it's not a chemical reaction, basically. It's mostly posing. There is intent behind it. It's like a dance. This is more throwing things up in the air."

Carrey is trying to be accurate, not modest, but he sells himself short, in a way—or, at least, sells short the effect that his virtuosity has on his audience, for whom the precision, the control with which he moves and talks in those cartoon roles is exhilarating, an expression of freedom and rebellion. (It takes a lot of control to play characters who can't control their impulses.) Most male movie comedians of the last decade or so are of the sloppy, shirttails-out variety, capable of conveying only perpetual adolescence, but Carrey has the vigorous, bursting physicality of a child combined with the physical confidence of a grown man. In his comedy, there is a potent rage to live.

Carrey's willingness to throw things up in the air is actually not new; throughout his career he has avoided safety as if it were a bad smell. In the mid-eighties, when he was a young comic doing impersonations of famous people, and had made a successful leap from the comedy clubs of his native Canada (he grew up on the outskirts of Toronto) to the clubs of Los Angeles, he dumped the act that had brought him standing ovations every night and began to work more improvisationally. Comedians' material and style are often dictated, for better and for worse, by their childhood experiences, and for Carrey the break with his old act was tied partly to his efforts—ongoing, still—to separate himself from his parents. "I did impressions of Tom Jones, and Sammy Davis, Jr., and people who weren't of my generation, because I started out wanting to do whatever dazzled Mom and Dad," he says. "And then, at a certain point, I saw where it was leading—to Vegas—and I didn't want to go there. Basically, the apex of my career would be doing a killer, right-on impression of someone *to* the person, and everybody around them would go, 'Oh, he's really got you down.' I didn't want to do that—I wanted to *be* that person. So I threw all that in the garbage, and started building from the ground up, just building something for myself. And it was a very turbulent time, because I included a lot of the duplicity I saw in my parents in my work. I was doing jokes about Mom's addiction to pain pills, and things like that, which was not welcome, you know, but I was just adamant about it. This was the truth for me; I had to express it. And I was terrified, because I had this act that was foolproof and would make me a lot of money, and I had everybody in the world telling me, 'You can't do it, you're looking a gift horse in the mouth, people don't get second chances in this profession.' "

A few people did encourage him, he says, including Rodney Dangerfield, an early champion of Carrey's, and his friend Judd Apatow, who met Carrey just after he shot the pilot for "In Living Color," the Keenen Ivory Wayans comedy show that ran from 1990 to 1994. "In Living Color" was the real springboard for Carrey's stardom, after several years of small parts in movies and a failed sitcom, "The Duck Factory," which lasted for only thirteen weeks in 1984. Apatow was trying to make it in standup in Los Angeles at the time and was "at the lowest rung of the comedy ladder," as he put it, speaking to me from his car phone on the Pacific Coast Highway. He said that Carrey was at the point where he had broken away from doing impressions—"He would go onstage every night and just spew what was in his mind." By taking risks that were rare in the world of standup, he eventually "reached his goal of being able to do an hour without doing James Dean." When Carrey describes this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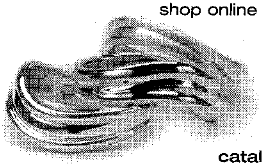
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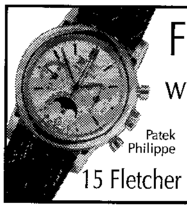
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period of experimentation, he invokes van Gogh: "I was lopping my ear off every night."

"He would kill for a few moments and then he would bomb for a little while, and then he would kill again," Apatow said. "Whenever he was bombing, he would pretend to call his wife and tell her how he was doing. He'd say, 'No, honey, it's going great. We won't have to worry about making ends meet anymore,' right when the audience hated his guts, and then he would win them back." A few years later, Apatow, who went on to be a writer and producer for "The Larry Sanders Show," "Freaks and Geeks," and this season's "Undeclared," was one of the producers of "The Cable Guy"; he worked with Carrey and Ben Stiller, the director, on the script, changing it from a buddy comedy to something darker, in which Carrey's attempt to become friends with Matthew Broderick contained more terror than affection. Combining Carrey's gifts for physical comedy and bizarre improvisations, they created the character of an isolated and obsessive cable installer named Chip Douglas (the name, people of a certain age will not need reminding, of one of the brothers on "My Three Sons"), who had been left alone in front of a TV too often as a child. It was a role that exposed in an exaggerated and relentless way, and to the displeasure of much of Carrey's audience, the telltale heart of desperation, neediness, and anger which beats under the skin of comedy. (Most of the attention Carrey got for the film had to do with the announcement, in 1995, that Columbia Pictures was paying him twenty million dollars for the role; it was the largest sum any actor had ever received for a movie, though the figure was not out of line considering that the three movies he had starred in the previous year—"Ace Ventura," "The Mask," and "Dumb & Dumber"—had grossed a total of almost seven hundred million dollars worldwide.) Apatow acknowledged that "The Cable Guy" was not destined to become beloved. "Cary Grant playing the bad guy or Jimmy Stewart playing the killer—those movies didn't sell a lot of tickets. People just like to see Jim win. But Jim didn't care, because he wasn't going to be pigeonholed as Ace Ventura or anything else. It laid down the track for 'The Truman Show' and 'Man on the Moon.' And, ever since then, Jim has a rhythm of doing an acceptable comedy and then something that throws them a curve."

## THE PATTERN

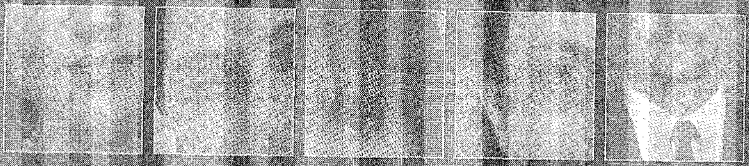
Thirty-six years, to the day, after our wedding,
When a cold figure-revealing wind blew against you
And lifted your veil, I find in its fat envelope
The six-shilling Vogue pattern for your bride's dress,
Complicated instructions for stitching bodice
And skirt, box pleats and hems, tissue-paper outlines,
Semblances of skin which I nervously unfold
And hold up in snow light, for snow has been falling
On this windless day, and I glimpse your wedding dress
And white shoes outside in the transformed garden
Where the clothesline and every twig have been covered.

—*Michael Longley*

The next afternoon, Carrey was filming a scene in the Majestic's lobby, in which Pete cleans off the glass covering the poster for the theatre's current attraction, "Sand Pirates of the Sahara." It's a throwaway moment that suddenly turns into an important one, as he sees his own name—Peter Appleton, the person he no longer remembers he is—listed as the movie's screenwriter. Before shooting the scene, Carrey stood with his chin in his hand and asked Darabont what was supposed to be going through his head as he looked at the poster. He walked around a little, and made some of his vocalizing sounds: "Humba humba hey-eeeee. Hoo hoo hoo hoo hoo." After one of the takes, the camera operator came into the office to talk to Carrey and Darabont about the framing of the scene. Carrey listened to him, and then said, "During the cleaning of the glass, should I be closer to the glass the whole time? Should I be *licking* the glass?" After a few more takes, Darabont said something to Carrey that I couldn't hear, and in response Carrey said, to his own amusement, "No director has ever said that to me before—'Jim, be bigger.' "

Carrey has a high level of awareness of himself as someone who demands attention from the world, and the struggle between his desire to be "big" and his desire to be life-size—between wanting to express himself to the max and to get away from himself—seems to be with him all the time. (The needy, showoffy aspect of Carrey's comedy has been parodied by Martin Short in his Jiminy Glick talk-show-host persona: speaking to Damon Wayans, who appeared with Carrey in "Earth Girls Are Easy," Glick said, "Does that ever get tiresome, Old Rubber Face saying, 'Ooh, look what I can do'?" He went on, "You know what, Jim? Go in the corner. We approve of you. We like you. We really— We're on your side. But you've got to stop it.") Self-conscious jokes about the nature of what Carrey does for a living and about his need—or his characters' need—for approval also find their way into his movies: in "Liar Liar," Carrey's son asks him if his face will freeze if he makes funny expressions, and he replies, "No, in fact some people make a good living that way"; in "Batman Forever," Carrey, playing the evil Riddler, says, after one deranged rant, "Was that over the top? I can never tell." At the end of "Liar Liar"—the movie in which Carrey has achieved the most satisfying blend of sea-level humanity and high-altitude silliness so far—the director, Tom Shadyac, appended several outtakes; in one of them, Shadyac, a friend of Carrey's (he directed "Ace Ventura"), put Swoosie Kurtz up to yelling "Over-actor!" at Carrey in a courtroom scene instead of her real line ("Bastard!"), to see how he would react. Everyone on the set breaks up, including Carrey, who then looks around shiftily and says to

# LIFE IN THE BALANCE



## Can We Be Both Safe *and* Free?

Caught in the crossfire of wartime rhetoric, Americans face the quandary of balancing the goals of security with the guarantees of personal freedom. While some advocate the sacrifice of liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) remains committed to defending our basic freedoms, even in today's evolving political landscape. We can be both safe *and* free.

Recognizing that open debate is fundamental to our society, the ACLU recently held a series of conversations with Americans around the country. A few of the participants were ACLU members; most were not. A composite drawn from this dialogue follows—one that reflects a diversity of both experience and opinion.

Americans everywhere are struggling to reconcile their strong commitment to personal freedom with the changes wrought by *the tragedies of September 11th*. We invite you to listen in and join the discussion.

ACLU
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# AN AMERICAN ROUNDTABLE

*Moderator:* ***When people talk about defending America against terrorism, what are we defending?***

***Mary:*** That you can come and go as you please and not worry about your safety or answering to anybody. You can basically do whatever you want in this country as long as you're not breaking the law.

***Sherri-Marie:*** The opportunity to prosper.

***John:*** Freedom means different things to different people. To me, it is basic rights . . . freedom of movement, freedom of privacy, freedom of religion.

**Sherri-Marie J.** • Long Beach, CA

***Farhat:*** As a new American I have absolutely loved the Constitution—the freedoms and liberties. I would die for that, to protect that.

*Moderator:* ***Do we need to suspend—or give up for a time—some personal freedoms in order to protect society from terrorism? Would you be willing to do that?***

***Fred:*** Yes, I will give up my personal freedom. I will go to the airport an hour earlier to check through security. I will allow my bags to be looked at when I go to the stadium and things like that. But for someone to come into your home, or detain a group of people simply because of their religion, definitely not. This is what we are fighting for, to have these freedoms.

**Chris B.** • Richmond, VA

***Marty:*** If the government says this is what you are going to have to do . . . I have three little girls and I am going to go to work, and I am going to come back and spend time with my family and whatever the government decides is what I am going to go with. Whether I like it or not, this is the way it is going to be.

**Steven B.** • Baltimore, MD

***Lynn:*** We have earned these freedoms. We established a government for ourselves that allows us to live freely. That's really something to be proud of. . . . I don't see how restricting freedoms at this point is going to make us that much safer.

***Peter:*** I am concerned that a central part of our Constitution is possibly in danger, that is, civil liberties and liberty in general. . . . My greatest fear is that we will undermine the very values and principles on which this nation was established.

*Moderator:* ***Your views of immigration—have they changed because of what happened? Should our policies change?***

**Farhat H.** • Monmouth, IL

***Lynn:*** The rights that we are talking about for ourselves and citizens do not extend to everybody who traipses into the country. If you are a person not of American citizenry, why should you get the same rights that I get?

***Mary:*** It's morally wrong to hold someone for an extended time without giving them a reason and letting them have the chance to explain their actions.

***Marcie:*** The fact that we're a nation of immigrants has made us the great country we are. It's because of the contributions of the immigrants.

**Peter D.** • Pittsburgh, PA

*Moderator:* ***What about using ethnic profiling to help capture terrorists? Do you think we need to be doing that right now?***

***Lynn:*** If I get on a plane and there's an angry Arab guy standing behind me, I don't really mind if you take a couple of extra minutes with him. I am not necessarily proud to say it, and I am not saying by any stretch of the imagination that every Arab or every Muslim is an extremist or a terrorist, but how do you know which one is and which one isn't?

***Chris:*** That would be like saying, "Okay, we're going to be suspicious of every Arab or every Muslim. . . ." It's like saying that because of a few kooks from the Ku Klux Klan, we're going to be suspicious of every Christian. I don't think it would be worthwhile.

***Sherri-Marie:*** As an African American woman, I already have been forced to give up some of my rights. Now it looks like Muslims in America may go through the same thing.

**Marcie S.** • Stamford, CT

***Farhat:*** We're supposed to be protecting freedom, but instead we are profiling people from certain parts of the world and taking away their liberties. . . . These new tools don't really help that much, but they do create lots of suspicion—with innocent people caught in trials. . . . This is a dangerous game and we need to be aware of the consequences.

***Candice:*** This is disturbing. Every single group that has come into this country has been subjected to ethnic profiling. The Italians were. The Polish were. The Irish were. We've all gone through it and hated it and we've all thought it was wrong. Now suddenly it's okay. Well, I don't think it is.

*Moderator:* ***The new anti-terrorism law gives law enforcement officials broad new powers to wiretap phones and monitor Internet communication. Do you think that these new tools are needed right now to fight terrorism?***

***Jordan:*** If the government wants to listen to my phone conversations, fine. It doesn't bother me. I have nothing to hide. I don't feel threatened. If the government has credible leads, they should be able to do those things—come into your house and look for things.

**Jordan S.** • Baltimore, MD

***Steven:*** You could think you have nothing to hide, but if you had a book or pamphlet in your house—something from the Middle East—or you wanted to know another point of view, the government could always interpret that as being something incriminating. "What are you doing reading this?" I don't know if I would like that.

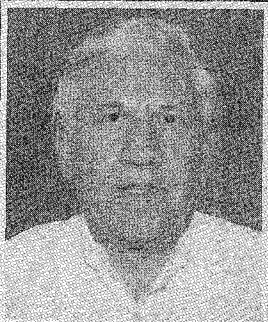
***Mary Louise:*** I'm not willing to give up my privacy. If they find a neighbor who says, "She is strange, check her out," or whatever, but without any cause whatsoever? I feel like they should have some sort of cause.

***What do you think about these issues?***

**CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION**
**at ACLU.ORG/SAFEFREE**

**PARTICIPANTS:**

**Mary G.**, Mechanicsville, VA
**Sherri-Marie J.**, Long Beach, CA
**John B.**, Greenwich, CT
**Farhat H.**, Monmouth, IL
**Fred B.**, Baltimore, MD
**Marty P.**, Pittsburgh, PA
**Lynn S.**, Pittsburgh, PA
**Peter D.**, Pittsburgh, PA
**Marcie S.**, Stamford, CT
**Chris B.**, Richmond, VA
**Candice V.**, Fair Lawn, NJ
**Jordan S.**, Baltimore, MD
**Steven B.**, Baltimore, MD
**Mary Louise C.**, Baltimore, MD



**Fred B.** • Baltimore, MD

### Three steps you can take to

# HELP KEEP AMERICA BOTH SAFE AND FREE

SAFE & FREE

## 1. STAY INFORMED

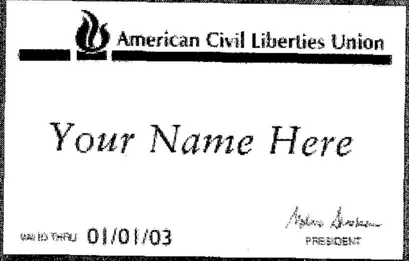
The ACLU's Web site is the up-to-the-minute online resource for the latest developments affecting our civil liberties. During this time of national crisis, information on topics ranging from airport security to wiretapping is updated constantly. Visit us often to join our online discussions and stay abreast of the state of civil liberties.

## 2. TAKE ACTION

Send a free fax to your elected *representatives and join the ACLU Action Network*—a rapidly growing list server program that generates E-mail messages to Congress on the critical civil liberties issues facing the nation today.

## 3. JOIN THE ACLU

In times when liberty faced its greatest peril, the ACLU was there when it counted. As our nation struggles to find the balance between security and civil liberties, the ACLU will be there again. Please support us by becoming a member.



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himself in a stage whisper, "Oh, no—they're onto me."

No one is more onto Carrey than he is. He told me that if he were to act on the stage he would want to play Starbuck, the con man in N. Richard Nash's "The Rainmaker," who charms people into believing that he can accomplish the impossible. "I *am* the Rainmaker," he said. "I've spent my whole life being Starbuck." A little while later, he added, "Whoever invented the mirror destroyed us."

Carrey calls himself a narcissist, but he seems not so much to be looking in the mirror as standing off to the side, watching himself look in the mirror—both fascinated and reluctant, as if he were wishing for something more interesting than himself to come along and engage his attention so he could finally turn away. In October, standing onstage with five firemen at Madison Square Garden at a benefit for the victims of the World Trade Center disaster, he said, "You know, if they'd told me six months ago that I was going to be onstage with these guys, with Mick Jagger, with the Who, with Eric Clapton, Elton John, Paul McCartney, I would have said, 'Yeah, right. Of course I will. Now pass the bong.' But I'm here, I'm a part of something greater than myself"—and here he broke into a knowing grin—"and that's not an easy thing for me to say." He added that the bravery of the rescue workers had "given us all something to aspire to," and when one of the firemen in the audience handed him a framed photograph of a comrade who had died on September 11th, Carrey, who had pledged a million dollars to a fund for victims' families, held it up and said, "That's what a hero looks like."

In June, Carrey said to me, "For so long, I have kind of desperately been trying to be the exception," and though he understands that "the very act of being in show business says that you want to separate yourself and be special, in some way or another," it is clear that being outstanding has been both a source and a symptom of pain in his life. He was animated about Emerson's essays—he had been turned on to them by Tom Shadyac—particularly "Self-Reliance," and "Compensation," which promulgates a nineteenth-century New England version of "What goes around comes around." Partly because the character Carrey plays in "The Majestic" raises questions about the definition of a hero and partly because he is at a point in his life when those questions are important to him, Carrey is trying to discover, for a change, what he has in common with other people, to achieve a state where he can "believe that what is true for you in your private heart, is true for all men," as Emerson writes in "Self-Reliance." The getting of wisdom is for Carrey a full-time job: "I'm a kamikaze right now. I want to feel everything horrible and wonderful in life." He calls himself a mystic and a psychic, and he sees signs everywhere. (He was also reading a book called "Your Sixth Sense: Unlocking the Power of Your Intuition," and he liked to bring a copy of "The Secret Language of Birthdays"—a natally based guide to personality—to the set to entertain the cast and crew.) When I asked him if he'd been in Los Angeles during the earthquake of 1994, he said, "It was my birthday—January 17th. That was two weeks before the first 'Ace' came out. I thought, Wow, that's like a good sign. That's a good omen." But he also has some idea of how this comes across to other people. "You know, I've been with therapists who say, 'Jim, calm down, the universe does not exist to give you messages.' " Laughing a little, he says, "And I go, 'I don't *know*. . . .' "

Several messages he received early in life have stuck with him. When he was fourteen, his father, who had given up a career as a saxophonist and become an accountant, lost his job as a controller at a local company. For a while, the family worked at a plant that made steel wheels, and lived in a house on the grounds of the factory. Jim, the youngest of four children—he has a brother and two sisters—worked the night shift as a janitor and went to school during the day. After several months, miserable and

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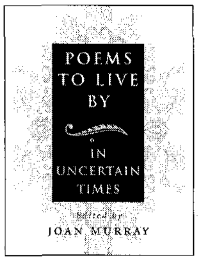

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bitter, they all quit and moved into a Volkswagen van, where they lived for almost a year. Carrey maintains that living in the van was a relative improvement, while admitting that "it sounds like the perfect dumb-celebrity thing to say." But the pressure of living this way made him leave school at sixteen, over no objections from his parents. He had always been funny, as his father was; his mother was depressive and a hypochondriac, and Jim had early on assumed the task of trying to shake her out of herself by making her laugh. Soon, with his father's encouragement and help, he started to break into the comedy scene in Toronto. While still a teen-ager, he was supporting his family.

Carrey's mother died in 1991, and his father in 1994, just as Carrey's movie career was exploding. Probably the most famous anecdote about Carrey has to do with his father's death. In 1990, before Carrey became a movie star, he made a check out to himself for the preposterous sum of ten million dollars, "for acting services rendered," and postdated it Thanksgiving of 1995. He carried it around with him, and when his father died—a few weeks after Carrey signed a ten-million-dollar contract for his next movie—he put the check in the pocket of his father's burial suit. Carrey regrets that his father didn't take the other road when he had the chance. "He basically got to the point where my mother said, 'Go down to the States, go see what you can do'—because he was really good, and he had his own orchestra in Toronto—but he never made the leap. He was afraid. I've learned a lot about how to live from my father. I've also learned about what not to do, what not to give in to."

Leaving the "Majestic" set for the lunch break, Carrey retrieved his briefcase, which contained a script he was reading and wouldn't talk about, the book of Emerson essays, and his CD Walkman (today he was listening to, and singing along with, the new Incubus CD between takes), and, aware that with his suit and briefcase he looked like a man going off to work, and aware that he was not the kind of man who had to put on a suit and go to an office every day but one who had made ten million dollars many times over in an occupation in which, as he put it, "the best pretender wins," he smiled like an idiot, broke into big, jaunty steps, and said with hollow, bright-eyed enthusiasm, "Look, it's the last scene of 'A Thousand Clowns'! I'm my father!"

The following Saturday afternoon, Carrey honked for me outside a Starbucks in Brentwood, a few miles from his house—he lives "about a mile and a half from the bloody glove," he says—and we headed to Will Rogers State Historic Park, a ten-minute drive toward the ocean. He was wearing gray cargo shorts and a white linen shirt and sneakers, and he had just been rollerblading with his daughter, Jane. They'd gone to the Strand at Venice "to watch the freaks," and to play "the movie-star game," which involved pointing out people who looked like movie stars. "You know—'There's Gene Hackman!'" (From 1987 to 1995, Carrey was married to Jane's mother, Melissa Womer, an aspiring actress whom he met when he was performing at the Comedy Store and she was a waitress there. He was then briefly married to the actress Lauren Holly. And then there was that whole Renée Zellweger thing, which ended last year.) We sat on a bench and watched a polo game until it ended and some soccer players took over the field. A group of people rode by on horseback. (Carrey himself learned to ride here, when he was preparing for "The Cable Guy," which has a medieval-jousting scene.)

He had been on the set until 3 A.M. the night before, and he had a chest cold, but he seemed to enjoy being in the midst of people playing together. He was trying, he said, to bring people into his life in a way that he hadn't felt able to earlier. "I have barbecues, which I never did before. I would go to people's parties, but I would never host something. I've made myself start doing that, because I just think it's the most important thing

in life, those moments of filling the swimming pool up with everybody's kids and doing cannonballs and stuff like that. Last weekend, I invited, you know, ten families and their kids and we had a blast. It was so much fun. I'm just really starting to realize that concentrating on your business all the time is a vacuum—sooner or later you run out of experience."

Carrey has struggled on and off with depression over the years. "Melancholia just goes with the territory of people who think a lot, who try to figure things out," he said. "I definitely have that dark side of my personality, so I have to find my way out of those things. When I sit around, I can get too intense. I'm a circular thinker—I get on the carrousel of thought and break things down about a thousand times. It's exhausting. I guess they call it obsessive-compulsion. I've always been like that. I've always had two people going—that's why duality is always a part of my stuff, I guess. I think I'm moving to the center, though, in my life."

He told me that, one way or another, what he's going through in his life finds its way into his movies. "There's always a myriad of things going on, you know," he said. "There's always personal things, relationships you're either getting over or going through, or family dynamics, and it all gets used. It's so parallel, the things you subconsciously pick for yourself, and then three weeks into it you go, Oh, my God, that's why I picked this script—I *am* this guy. 'The Grinch' was so perfect, because at the time I was feeling so green, and furry, and like a freak. Antisocial and not happy about being a star at all. I learned a lot of patience. 'Ace Ventura,' I was going through a divorce, and I was sitting there crying at the monitors while I was doing the funniest movie in the world and having the best time of my life but at the same time coming apart at the seams. I couldn't do this movie if I hadn't gone to Hell. No one is interesting until they're on their knees begging for their life. You're a child until that happens."

I said that he seemed to have a high tolerance for pain of various kinds.

"Well, I've asked for a lot, you know. I pray for wisdom, and when you pray for wisdom you get your ass kicked."

The phrase calls to mind Carrey's character in "Liar Liar," an unscrupulous lawyer who lies and charms his way through life in order to win cases and to remain emotionally unencumbered. He constantly makes promises to his young son that he doesn't keep, so one day his son—blowing out the candles on his cake at a birthday party that his father has failed to show up for—makes a wish that Carrey won't be able to lie for twenty-four hours. Carrey goes through all sorts of contortions, literal and emotional, as he tries to revert to his old ways but is pulled in new directions by the irresistible force of the love behind his son's wish. In a scene in a courthouse bathroom, Carrey throws himself around, punches himself in the chin, puts soap in his eyes, rips his clothes, upends a garbage can on himself, slams into a radiator, and bangs a toilet seat over his head repeatedly. Someone comes in and asks him what he's doing, and he screams, "I'm kicking my ass! *Do you mind*?"

We had been walking up a dirt path to Inspiration Point, at the top of the park, a spot that offered a spectacular view, partially veiled in smog that day, of the city of Los Angeles and the Pacific Ocean. Along the way, he had told me to watch out for rattlesnakes, because he had seen a baby rattler there once. I was startled by a rock that suddenly landed near my feet, and then I realized that Carrey had tossed it. "It's an old Canadian trick," he said, smiling.

At the summit, he talked about life at the top. "So what you do is you decide, O.K., I'm going to be something, I'm going to make myself something wonderful. And you go after fame and money and everything else, everything that makes you seem special, and you get it. And it is such a complete disappointment in that regard, because all that ever matters in your life is what you feel about yourself. So a hundred billion people can tell you, 'We worship you, you are God,' and you will go, 'Yeah, but I fuckin' pick my nose in the car.' Whatever. So you get disappointed with that initially. You go, 'Oh, well, that didn't fill that hole.' It's the Rosebud thing, you know? You've got that hole you're left with by whatever your parents couldn't give you. And you try to fill it with fame, and you try to fill it with money, and you try to fill it with whatever. Some people fill it with drugs, but it doesn't work. None of it works. You have to mourn the loss and forget it. You're never going to get Rose-

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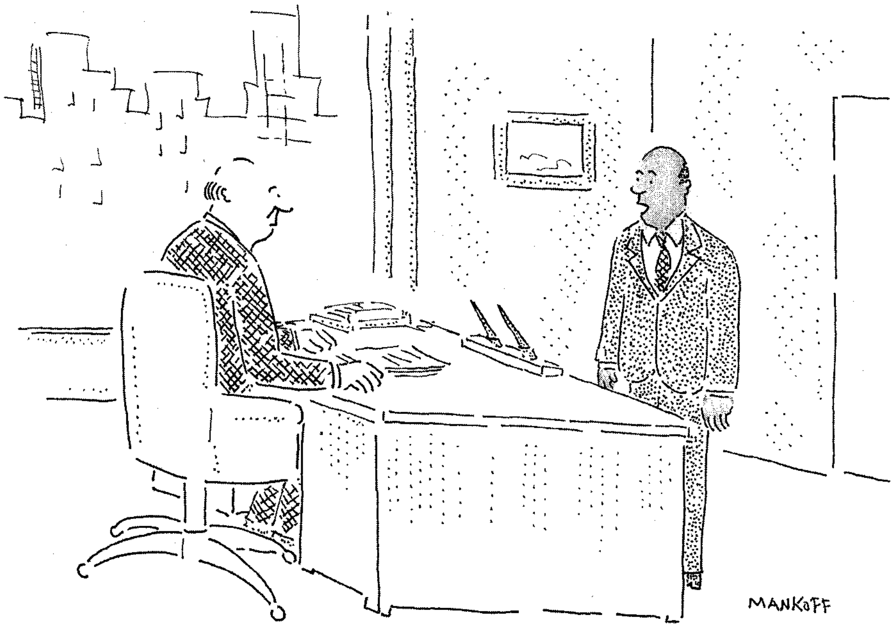

*"Well, if there's not going to be any bonus, how about some reparations?"*

bud. Rosebud burned up in the furnace.

"So the only thing that's going to make me a happy person is to make choices that make me respect myself, and that's it. And mourn, you know? Which I do. What I've been going through on this movie was grieving that loss, and realizing that you've got to stop looking for people and things that will fill that void. It's just going to be part of you. I think when you do that, ultimately, then there's a chance for you to be satisfied with what you can have. With what's there. I think it's O.K. once you realize, You know what? I'm going to be bummed sometimes. That's just it. Sometimes you're going to be frickin' lonely."

Toward the end of "The Cable Guy," when Carrey's Chip Douglas is dangling by one hand from a tower, about to plunge into a satellite dish hundreds of feet below, the nerve-racked Matthew Broderick, in a last-ditch effort to thwart the suicide attempt of his pursuer—a psychopath who has no friends, only "preferred customers"—tries to convince him that he's not really so different from everyone else, and that he just needs to get some help. "We all get lonely," Broderick says, taking the soothing, therapeutic approach. It's unexpectedly funny when Chip, who is, it is by now clear, insane, suddenly has a moment of utter clarity. Rolling his eyes in disbelief at Broderick's denseness, he calls out, "Yeah, but I get *really* lonely. I mean, *look* at me. Come on!"

In a biography of Carrey published in 1995, the author, Roy Trakin, lists, tongue in cheek, the "Top Ten Things That Will Happen to Jim Carrey in the Next Decade." One of the predictions reads, "He will do a remake of 'It's a Wonderful Life' in the Jimmy Stewart role and critics will long for the 'earlier, funnier Jim Carrey.' " Carrey has not remade "It's a Wonderful Life," but something of the spirit of the Capra movie—its small-town values, its message of accepting and appreciating your place in the scheme of things—permeates "The Majestic." Carrey has long idolized Stewart, and says that he "really wasn't a connoisseur of comedy" when he was young. "I was so serious, in a certain way. I never rented comedies. I rented really heavy dramas. Comedy was in my *house*—that was how we dealt with each other." He says that Stewart had "the divine spark," but he is not much more specific than that. "There's something about him—you don't really give a damn what he says, you just want to be around him. 'Cause you know that there's goodness there; there's something really worthwhile there." Several years ago, referring to "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington"—another Capra movie starring Jimmy Stewart—Carrey said, "I want to be a Mr. Smith," because "he's a hero, not an ego."

Darabont said to me, "I've always seen that Jimmy Stewart quality in him. I've seen it in 'The Truman Show.' He did a little TV movie once called 'Doing Time on Maple Drive.' He's wonderful in it." (In "Doing Time," which ran on Fox in 1992, Carrey played an alcoholic son in a miserable, "Ordinary People"-like family.) "I've seen it in moments in 'Liar Liar.' Even in 'The Mask,' in the quiet moments between all the wackiness, there's this guy that I find incredibly engaging." But, he adds, "All this talk of Jimmy Stewart shouldn't lead people to think he's doing an impression of Jimmy Stewart." (Carrey, in fact, used to do an impression of Jimmy Stewart, calmly warning people, in a folksy voice, that a nuclear holocaust was about to happen.) "It's not about that at all. It's Jim playing a role in a very honest and organic way."

If you see the wicked smile on Carrey's face when he analyzes the character he played in "The Cable Guy" or hear him talk about persuading Warner Bros. to leave the words "Pet Detective" in the title of "Ace Ventura," on the ground that "apologizing for what you're doing is the worst thing you could possibly do," you know that he will never turn his back on comedy, but he does believe that "to go on and not take chances is death, is atrophy." (In the spring, Carrey will begin filming a romantic comedy along the lines of "Blithe Spirit," with Nicole Kidman as his co-star.) And it is no secret that Carrey would like to win an Academy Award—to have his journey toward "serious" roles validated the way Jack Lemmon's was, and the way Tom Hanks's and Robin Williams's have been—and that he was disappointed not even to be nominated for "The Truman Show" and "Man on the Moon." Successful comic actors, after becoming loved for what they can do, seem to want to become loved for who they are, or who they think they should be. They are compelled to try to "strip the tricks away"—never mind that their tricks *are* who they are. Still, the call of the Oscar is powerful, and the Motion Picture Academy has a long history of not recognizing great comic performances. (Of course, if Carrey never does get an Oscar, he will be in some very good company, including the likes of Richard Burton, Fred Astaire, Barbara Stanwyck, and Cary Grant; Henry Fonda won his one and only Oscar for his last movie, at the age of seventy-six.) No one connected with "The Majestic" brought up the subject of the Oscars (both of Darabont's earlier movies received nominations), but Carrey, by working with Larry Moss, is, in a way, training at the Oscar gym: Moss coached Helen Hunt for "As Good as It Gets" (Oscar), Hilary Swank for "Boys Don't Cry" (Oscar), and Michael Clarke Duncan for "The Green Mile" (Oscar nomination).

I mentioned to Moss a scene in "Dumb & Dumber" that killed me. When Carrey's character, Lloyd Christmas, tells Lauren Holly's character that he likes her and she says that his chances with her are about one in a million, his face lights up (showing the chipped front tooth that Carrey had de-capped for the movie) as though she had told him that she wanted to spend the rest of her life with him. The level of Lloyd's cluelessness, which has been high all along, has just gone through the roof, and your heart goes out to him in his failure to recognize hopelessness when he's staring it in the face. Moss nodded. "It's the ultimate clown," he said. "The real clown is heartbreaking."

Moss said that great moments are about making choices. "It's what you're willing to do to expose yourself, whether you're conscious of it or not. It's what Sean Penn did in 'Fast Times at Ridgemont High.' He allowed us to be touched by a stock character. He took something generic and made it specific. Great actors are always specific. They don't equivocate—they say, 'That's what I mean, whether you like it or not.' It's like James Dean in 'East of Eden' when he hits his brother. It's one of the greatest punches in all of cinema. How does he do it? What's the choice? His brother says, 'You want to hit me? You want to hit me?' And James Dean goes '*Rraaaahh!*' " Moss made a big circular motion in the air with his fist. "It's the most unbelievable punch I've ever seen in a movie. Because there's no stopping him. It's completely released. That's when acting becomes art. That's choice. This is what Jim does in all his movies. He makes these unbelievable choices and then he commits to them, and people go, 'I can't believe he's doing that!' And he does the same thing in this, except it's much more subtle."

Carrey's eagerness to learn and willingness to be inspired by others sometimes make him seem younger than he is. He said of his relationship with Larry Moss, "We all need someone we don't want to disappoint." He is inspired by the example of Martin Landau, who turned seventy a week after his shooting on "The Majestic" was completed. "It makes it possible, when you see a person like him doing great work at his age," Carrey says. "He's so excited, stoked about it. He's been through the wringer, and he's not jaded. That's the worst thing in life, I think. My examples are not the best in that regard. My parents didn't really have a zest for life later on, you know? They just waited. I won't let that happen. You have to keep it pumped, keep it interesting—go into new territory, and scare the crap out of yourself. It's not like I want to be good enough to just pull this off—I want to excel at it."

Darabont said that in his experience Carrey's commitment to "really getting it right" is virtually unparalleled. Sitting outside on a bench at the Lot while a scene was being lit, he added, "He can be pretty intense about it, too. We shot the big climactic sequence of the movie, which was the HUAC hearing, downtown, for about five days. It's at least a ten-minute scene. We had four key actors, we had five hundred extras, we had this enormous set of challenges to meet, but ultimately the performance is the engine that drives the sequence, and, boy, Jim will go beyond the point of exhaustion in shooting a sequence like that. The day that we were shooting his angles on this ten minutes of very emotional whipsawing and dialogue, he just kept going and going, and everybody was exhausted just watching him. But he was still there. He was still there. He's like the boxer in the ring who won't go down no matter how many times you hit him." Darabont laughed. "And in that you see those magnificent moments of truth and reality that just kind of take your breath away. You say, 'Wow, well, there's the movie. There it is.' " ♦

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LETTER FROM CANADA

# PAPER BARON

*What would Conrad Black do to become a British lord?*

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

It's tempting to see this tale as an illustration of the ancient warning to be careful what you wish for because you might get it. But maybe that's not what it is at all. Maybe it's a confirmation of what mothers are always telling their children about how you have to persevere in order to achieve your fondest desire, whatever that desire may be. The story begins in the late nineties, at a time when Conrad Black—who is among the investors now engaged in launching a daily called the *Sun* as a conservative alternative to the New York *Times*—had acquired most of the daily newspapers in Canada, where he was born and raised. What Conrad Black seemed to wish for was not what Canadian mothers have customarily had in mind when they discuss fondest desires. He wanted to be in the British House of Lords.

Americans of a certain age may still think of Canadians as having ties to the United Kingdom and the monarchy strong enough to produce the occasional viscount in places like Saskatoon or Yellowknife. It is true that members of the Canadian Parliament still swear an oath to the Queen, and that the Queen remains Canada's head of state, through her representative, the Governor General. It wasn't until 1952 that someone who had actually been born in Canada, Vincent Massey, became Governor General, and the names of Massey's predecessors, from 1952 back to the Great War, do not make them sound like people who were completely at home in the New World: Viscount Alexander, the Earl of Athlone, Lord Tweedsmuir, the Earl of Bessborough, Viscount Willingdon, Lord Byng, the Duke of Devonshire, and H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught.

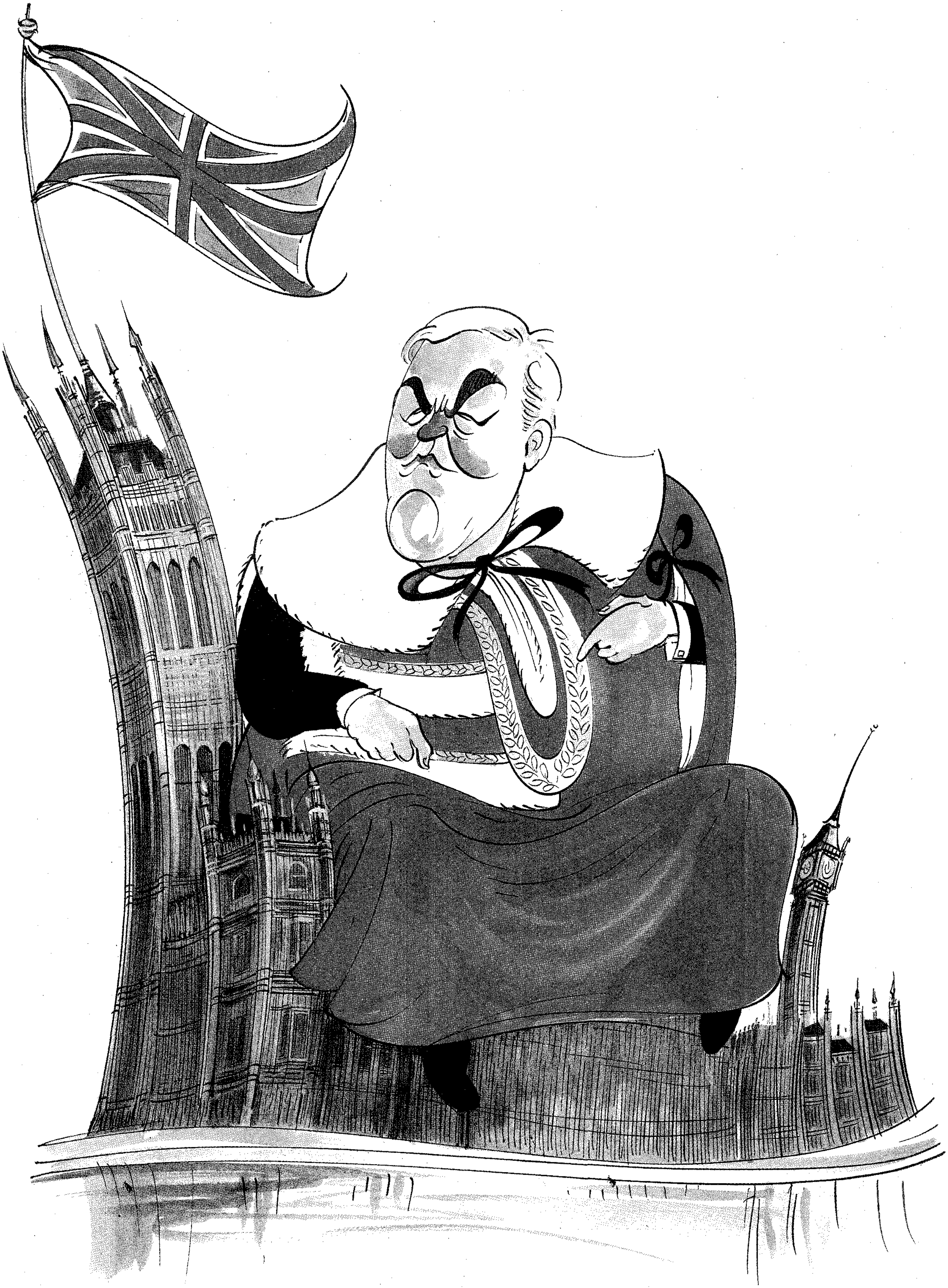
For the past half century, though, Canada's efforts to assume its place in the world as an important and independent nation required that it separate itself from the United Kingdom—at least, until those efforts more urgently required that it separate itself from the United States. There are now laws in Canada, for instance, that make it difficult for a non-Canadian to launch certain types of cultural projects or to own a newspaper. Since Massey's day, the Governor General has always been a Canadian. The incumbent, a former television broadcaster named Adrienne Clarkson, was born of Chinese parents in Hong Kong.

Even before Massey, there was a disinclination—particularly among members of the Liberal Party, which has dominated the government for the past hundred years—to accept titles, and in 1919 the Canadian House of Commons passed a resolution asking the British monarch "to refrain hereafter from conferring any title of honour or titular distinction upon any of your subjects domiciled or ordinarily resident in Canada." The author of the resolution, a Conservative M.P. named William Folger Nickle, said, "I hope we are going to be a democracy in the broad and true sense of that word"—although some saw his motive as having less to do with democracy than with bitterness at having failed to get a knighthood for his father-in-law. There are, of course, people in Canada who still dwell on their ancestors' having been Empire Loyalists or on having fought for King and Country themselves in the Second World War. In general, though, Canada, a country that prides itself on its diversity and its egalitarianism, has gradually lost touch with the sort of life that might tempt a man to take a title like Lord Tweedsmuir and then use it with a straight face.

There are those who would say that the uneasiness Canadians have with titles reflects something approaching hostility toward anyone who rises too far above the crowd. The great Canadian novelist Robertson Davies used to tell of the response at a reception in British Columbia when the news came that Lester Pearson, later the Prime Minister of Canada, had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. "Well!" somebody said. "Who does he think he is!" Robert Fulford, a Canadian essayist and journalist, notes that this trait has been described as a national characteristic of any number of other countries, including England and Sweden. Australia actually has a phrase for it: the tall-poppy syndrome. Conrad Black is on record as considering it a particularly Canadian trait. In his autobiography, Black wrote that English-speaking Canadians had "a sadistic desire, corroded by soul-destroying envy, to intimidate all those who might aspire to anything in the slightest exceptional."

Black's observation came in the course of recounting a conversation he'd once had with Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who was discussing his own tall-poppy problems and remarking, according to Black's account, that Canada was difficult to govern partly because French-speaking Canadians boo the loser and English-speaking Canadians boo the winner. Trudeau was a glamorous enough figure to have inspired what was then called Trudeaumania, but glamour has been of limited value in Canadian politics. The twentieth-century Prime Minister who managed to remain in power for the longest time was Mackenzie King, a less than scintillating labor consultant who had an aversion to the grand gesture, reflected in his observation that "it is what we prevent rather than what we do that counts most in government." The only modern Prime Minister who has formed three consecutive majority governments is the incumbent, Jean Chrétien, who is known as *le petit gars de Shawinigan*—the little guy from Shaw-

GERALD SCARFE



*Black gloried in being Canada's most prominent conservative; he called his countrymen "whining, politically conformist welfare addicts."*

inigan, the drab mill town where he was brought up, one of nineteen children born to a paper-mill machinist and his wife. The Prime Minister is often described as being unable to speak either of Canada's official languages. Still, in the course of leading the Liberal Party to three straight victories he has nearly obliterated what had been the majority party in Parliament, the Progressive Conservatives. A clue to his approach may be that for decades he has managed to be known as "the little guy" even though he is six feet two. Speaking recently of the elements of Chrétien's success, someone who has been close to him said, "The Prime Minister works hard at being humble."

Conrad Black does not. A tall man in his late fifties, he has thickened a bit over the years but is still spoken of as being of theatrical bearing, a man who draws all eyes when he enters a room and is aware of it. "His personality had a staged, directed feel to it," Robert Fulford wrote, after a 1987 lunch with Black to explore the question of whether Fulford would remain as editor of *Saturday Night*, a distinguished old magazine, which Black had just bought. (Fulford, without getting into an un-Canadian snit about it, decided in the negative.) "It was also oddly familiar. Where had I seen it before, a large, handsome man with a supercilious and condescending manner and a baroque vocabulary? Of course: Orson Welles in Citizen Kane."

Black had picked up *Saturday Night* during a period of acquisition, often buying from families that had grown weary of dealing with the business or with each other. (A Toronto newspaperman said recently, "You don't want to be having a fight with your cousin when Conrad's around.") Although he gained a reputation for running a bare-bones operation—one of his partners, David Radler, once joked that his own contribution to journalism was the three-man newsroom, with two of its occupants also selling advertising—he improved some newspapers, particularly in larger cities. Black was never the sort of Canadian mogul who seems vaguely embarrassed about making a lot of money from his enterprises. He rode around in a Rolls-Royce and commissioned a family coat of arms to hang above the door of his Toronto estate, for which he concocted the name Havenwold. As the honorary colonel of the Governor General's Foot Guards during a royal visit to Canada in 1997, Black hovered just behind Queen Elizabeth in a uniform that, in the view of those editors who seemed to take great delight in running the picture at any opportunity, made him look like an overattentive chauffeur.

*"All I can say is thank goodness for teleconferencing."*

Black always invited celebrated people he admired—people like Margaret Thatcher and David Brinkley and William F. Buckley, Jr.—to the annual dinner of Hollinger, his media company. In London, where he established his main base of operations after taking control of the *Daily Telegraph,* in the middle eighties, he moved among those people who appear to be bound together by believing quite genuinely that there is great cachet in having, say, a British royal or Henry Kissinger around for dinner. At the 1987 lunch, Fulford wrote, Black "dropped the names of Katharine Graham, George Shultz, the Aga Khan, and Henry Kissinger, all in one paragraph. It occurred to me that I might never see this feat equalled in my lifetime."

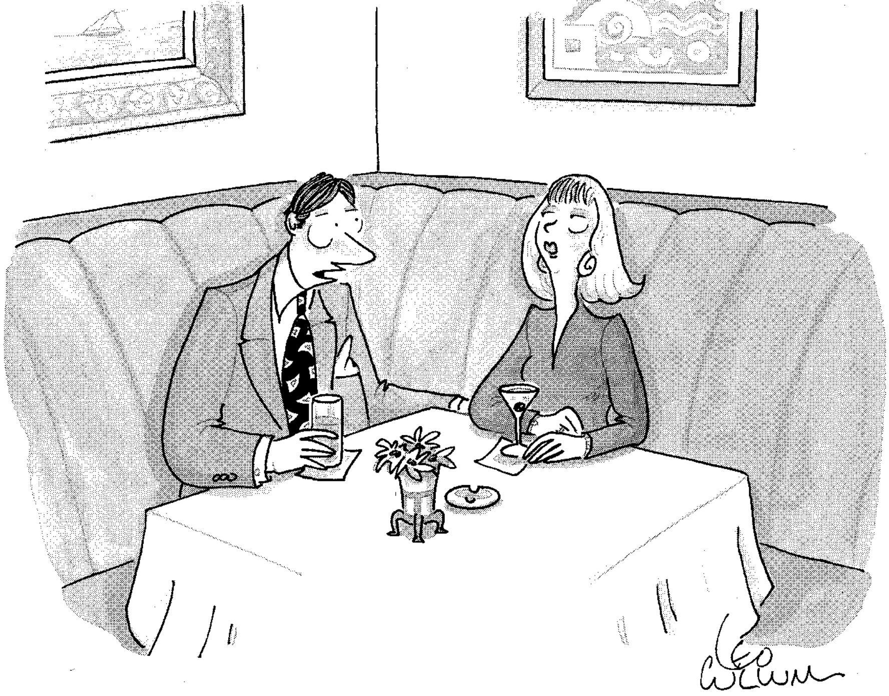
The historical figures Black was said to admire were even more important than the people he entertained at dinner, and the impression he gave of identifying with them hinted at what one British journalist called "a prodigious sense of his own destiny." Black's wife once told a reporter that he liked to ponder important decisions while sitting in a chair that Napoleon Bonaparte had occupied when signing treaties. His reputation for both acquisitiveness and devotion to great historical figures has been such that his assistant in London once had to state formally, in response to press inquiries, "The proprietor of the *Daily Telegraph* would like to go on the record to say that he does certainly not own Napoleon's penis."

As the nineties came to an end, Conrad Black's empire was a subject of concern to those who write about the Canadian press. They were not particularly interested in his holdings in Great Britain or in Israel (the Jerusalem *Post*) or in the United States (the Chicago *Sun-Times*, among other papers). But they questioned whether it was healthy for one man to control a majority of the daily newspapers in Canada. In three out of the ten provinces, Black owned all the daily newspapers. In a stroke that even his enemies acknowledged as audacious and brave, he had launched, in October of 1998, a multi-section daily in Toronto, called the *National Post*, to compete with the *Globe & Mail* as a national newspaper—a project similar to but much more ambitious than the *Sun*, which apparently is envisioned as a thin broadsheet concentrating on New York.

Part of what troubled the people who wrote articles about Conrad Black's having too much power was that he was eager to bring Canadians around to his way of thinking. He clearly considered himself a man of ideas. He had begun as an indifferent and rebellious student. At a Toronto prep school called Upper Canada College, which is sometimes referred to as the Eton of Canada, he was guaranteed outsider status by being a nonathlete who, betraying no concern about how established Wasps were expected to behave in a country that valued the low-key, frequently arrived at school in a limousine and took an interest in how many servants various classmates had. He was ejected for selling copies of final exams. After further academic misadventures, though, Black got degrees in both law and history and eventually turned his master's thesis into a thick biography of Maurice Duplessis, the longtime premier of Quebec. The image many Canadians have of Black was acquired from a scene that a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation crew shot in the home of a fellow-tycoon in 1980 as a way of illustrating Black's interest in military history: a man in a baronial room reënacting great battles by moving antique toy soldiers around a baize-covered table. Known for his prodigious memory, Black can recite, say, the armaments and tonnage of all the battleships in the Second World War. It was after listening to a torrent of such information that Margaret Thatcher supposedly responded, "I know, Conrad."

Although Black launched the *National Post* at a time when the truly national political parties in Canada ranged from one usually described as conservative to one sometimes described as socialist (the New Democratic Party), all of them could be included in what Black might categorize as "the odious soft left." The inclinations of the Canadian mainstream are toward the welfare state, which Black has called an "overgenerous reinsurance policy for an underachieving people." Members of the Canadian intelligentsia tend to be, if not overtly anti-American, at least resistant to America, a country Black so admires that he has suggested that English-speaking Canada, as an alternative to endless and debilitating haggling with French-speaking Canada in an effort to keep the country together, could do worse than see what kind of deal it could cut with Washington. In speeches and columns and articles, Black made it clear that he—particularly in his role as proprietor of the *National Post*—meant to provide an alternative to the left-of-center policies that he believed were eroding the economy and causing the more enterprising and talented Canadians to flee south in great numbers. At a party he gave for the staff on the first anniversary of the *Post*, he said that the paper's goal was to change Canada from the sort of place in which the government took money away from people who earned it and gave it to people who hadn't.

Black has always given the impression of being unafflicted with doubt about his political views or about himself, although in his autobiography he mentions that in his mid-twenties he consulted a psychiatrist because of symptoms that now sound similar to those that afflicted Tony Soprano. Black presents his exam-selling scheme as part of



*"I'll never forget where I'm telling my wife I was that day."*

• •

"I'm afraid you've had a paradigm shift."

an elaborate campaign in which he is cast in the role of those dazzlingly resourceful Allied prisoners in Second World War movies who manage somehow to gain a measure of power over their captors. ("I conceived and unleashed a systematic campaign of harassment and clerical sabotage against the regime.") In his telling, he was engaged in something close to exam-selling as a matter of principle.

From the start, the *Post* hammered away at a few of the issues that troubled its proprietor about the Canadian consensus—the brain drain, for instance, and the problems with Canada's national health system and high taxes. It would commission surveys and then massage the results sufficiently so that figures showing that a majority believed the government-run health system worked pretty well could produce the headline "'HUGE SUPPORT' FOUND FOR PRIVATE HEALTH CARE." The *National Post* did everything in its power to create a national party that would be an authentic hard-right alternative to the Liberals. Coming up with indications of cronyism by Chrétien concerning a golf-course project near Shawinigan, the *Post* ran what the humorist Larry Zolf estimated to be "more words about Jean Chrétien's home riding in an average day than there are actual voters living and breathing in that economically beleaguered constituency." The relentless coverage eventually so irritated Chrétien that he tracked Black down in Austria in the middle of the night to phone in a complaint.

Some of the columnists Black hired for the *Post* were right-wing, but some of them weren't—and virtually all of them wrote engaging prose. By all accounts, there was a good deal of esprit de corps on the paper. A number of the young journalists agreed with the proprietor's ideas on free-market economics; those who didn't tended to bond with their colleagues partly from being asked again and again by friends and acquaintances how they could work for a monster like Conrad Black. From the start, the layout of the *National Post* was inviting and the selection of stories imaginative. Although the paper continued to lose a lot of money, it was also giving the *Globe & Mail* much more serious competition in circulation than had been anticipated. Many people who didn't agree with the *National Post's* political views looked forward to picking it up every day.

Given the near-extinction of the Progressive Conservatives as a parliamentary party after Chrétien won reëlection easily in 1997, the *National Post* was sometimes referred to as the "official opposition." Its personification was Conrad Black, the country's most prominent conservative voice. He seemed to glory in the role. Black has always had a taste for verbal combat. It has been written that he never uses one word when six will do, and among the six there will probably be a couple of words like "puerile" or "febrile," or even "rumbustious." Perhaps the best known of Black's combat quotes is about journalists: "My experience with journalists authorizes me to record that a very large number of them are ignorant, lazy, opinionated, intellectually dishonest and inadequately supervised." And he felt sufficiently experienced to tell that to a committee of the Canadian Senate at the age of twenty-five. He has characterized the views of the New Democratic Party as "lobotomous neutralist drivel," and he once referred to René Lévesque, the Quebec separatist, as a "repulsive little gnome . . . greasy, twitchy and specious." When the Bishop of Calgary showed sympathy for strikers at one of Black's newspapers, Black, who was brought up as an Anglican but converted to Catholicism, wrote, "If your jumped-up little twerp of a bishop thinks I'm not a very good Catholic, I think he's a prime candidate for exorcism."

John Fraser, a journalist who is now master of Massey College in the University of Toronto, was one of Black's few friends at Upper Canada College, and their old-school bond was strengthened when they took abrupt leave of U.C.C. the same year. (Fraser was innocent of any participation in the exam-selling scheme but innocent also of the rudiments of physics.) In an essay about what it had been like to work for his school chum—when Fulford left *Saturday Night*, Black installed Fraser as the editor—Fraser wrote, "One of his English editors once said that the proprietor's bark was worse than his bite. While this may be true, it does not give due credit to the bark, for it is a great bark."

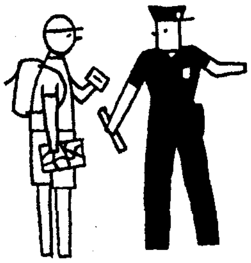
Conrad Black once said, in an interview with the *Globe & Mail*, "Every chairman of the *Daily Telegraph* in the history of that paper has been a peer, so I don't think it's that hard to envision achieving that status." Also, the two previous Canadian-born press barons to whom Black was comparable in scale and approach—all made a pile of money in Canada and then became players on Fleet Street—had been transformed into Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Thomson of Fleet. (Beaverbrook's peerage came before the Nickle Resolution; Roy Thomson, a longtime resident of Great Britain, gave up his Canadian citizenship in 1963 in order to become Lord Thomson.) Margaret Thatcher was Conrad Black's kind of Prime Minister—self-assured, contemptuous of those in the Party she considered "wet"—and in 1989 Barbara Amiel, a prominent Canadian journalist who was to become Black's second wife a few years later, said to the Toronto *Star*, "There's just no way Mrs. Thatcher can leave office without giving [a peerage] to him." But Mrs. Thatcher did just that, and Black did not have as close a relationship with her successor, John Major. Finally, in 1999, when Tony Blair was Prime Minister, Black was confidentially informed by William Hague, then the leader of the Conservative Party, that his name would be among those in the Opposition's allocation of new members to be appointed by the Queen to the House of Lords.

Before that information became public, Black made inquiries to satisfy himself that a Canadian could accept the appointment. In the thirty-six years since Lord Thomson had given up his Canadian citizenship in order to accept his title, dozens of Canadians had been given foreign honors of one sort or another, but none had been appointed to the House of Lords, which is, after all, part of the legislature of another country. In 1977, though, the Canadian Parliament had passed a law permitting dual citizenship, and Black's lawyers in Toronto believed that the 1977 law fundamentally changed the equation. Black consulted the Canadian High Commissioner in London, and apparently received assurances that the Canadian government would have no reason to object as long as he became a British citizen as well as a Canadian.

Black applied for British citizenship and, in a demonstration of bureaucratic alacrity that might have astonished those Bangladeshi kitchen workers who had been waiting some time for the same distinction, received it within a day or two. But there had been a leak. On June 8, 1999, the *Globe & Mail* ran an item saying that Black was "in negotiations with authorities in the British and Canadian governments to allow him to take a seat in the House of Lords," and that the appointment was to be made officially by the Queen in ten days. Chrétien's office, hearing that news for the first time, said the matter required further consideration.

On the day before the list of new appointments to the House of Lords was to be announced, the editor of the *National Post*, Ken Whyte, was awakened by a telephone call from the proprietor, who was terribly upset. "Do you know what that bastard has done?" Black said. The Prime Minister had informed the British that Canada would not be pleased to have one of its citizens named to the House of Lords. The next day, Black's name was dropped by Tony Blair from the list of nominations.

Black placed an angry phone call to Chrétien demanding that the decision be reversed. Getting no satisfaction, he sued, claiming that he had been caused great public embarrassment by what was essentially an abuse of power by the Prime Minister. As a lawyer representing Black in the case later put it, "The table was set and along came the Prime Minister and took away the roast beef." Black was no stranger to litigation. For some years, he had regularly responded to articles he considered defamatory, particularly those that implied questionable business practices, with lawsuits. But the suit against Chrétien, unlike a libel action in a country whose libel laws favor the plaintiff, seemed like a long shot.



Also, suing somebody for having caused you "considerable public embarrassment" is sort of a, well, public embarrassment. But Black and his lawyers apparently thought that once the case got to court—once, for instance, there was testimony about Chrétien's complaints concerning the *National Post's* Shawinigan pieces—it would be the Prime Minister who would be embarrassed. And Black's public image was not of a man who would slink off the field simply because his opponent had managed to get in one good whack.

The suit against Chrétien, in which Black asked for damages of twenty-five thousand dollars, was a case in which both sides sounded rather persuasive. Black's statement of claim noted any number of foreign honors that had been granted Canadians, including a viscountcy and two baronetcies, without any objection from the Canadian government. It pointed out that the Nickle Resolution, which the Prime Minister's office was citing as the source for its objections, was simply a resolution passed by one house, not a law that bound subsequent parliaments. Even if the Nickle Resolution had been binding, Black's lawyers argued, it was, in effect, reversed in 1977: if you permit a Canadian to be a citizen of another country, how can you limit the citizenship rights he enjoys in that country? Such a limitation would result in Black's being what he later characterized as "the only sane, solvent, unincarcerated adult citizen of the United Kingdom ineligible for an honor for the sole reason that I was also a citizen of another country that shared a chief of state with the United Kingdom."

The defense claimed that the Nickle Resolution was confirmed by regulations promulgated in 1968 and a policy issued in 1988, under the Progressive Conservatives, stating that Canada "shall not" approve a foreign award that carries with it "any precedence or privilege." Whatever the wisdom of Chrétien's intervention and whatever his motives, the defense argued, how can a court tell a Prime Minister that he cannot make any request he wants to make of a foreign government? The foreign government, of course, would be free to grant or refuse the request. If Conrad Black felt the need to sue somebody over the dropping of his name from the Queen's list, it was suggested, he should sue Tony Blair.

There was no shortage of people supporting the claim that Black's situation was embarrassing. In expressing mock sympathy for those who worked at the *National Post*, an editorialist wrote in the Toronto *Star*, "It must be hard to convince readers that you work for a serious publication when your boss is making a laughingstock of himself on both sides of the Atlantic." Black was referred to as Lord Almost and Lord Nearly-Nearly and His Lardship. For some time, the political-satire magazine *Frank* had been referring to Black as Tubby and depicting him in cartoon strips in his Foot Guard's uniform. (In the cartoon strips, the *National Post* became the *Daily Tubby;* Barbara Amiel Black, who is fiercely conservative and has been described as "preternaturally sexy" by her husband, was called Barbarella and depicted in a costume that permitted her to rapid-fire bullets from her breasts.) After the peerage was blocked by the Prime Minister—he is known as Crouton in *Frank*—Black was upgraded to Lord Tubby of Fleet (Pending) or His Tubship. In stories about Black's "peerage interruptus," the picture of him in his Foot Guard's getup was often included—supplanted now and then by a shot of him walking into a costume ball dressed as Cardinal Richelieu.

But Black also had some people on his side, and not just ideological allies. The editor of *Maclean's*, Anthony Wilson-Smith, wrote that the Prime Minister's "churlishness towards foes" was an unattractive trait and that Conrad Black, a man who was capable of great personal kindnesses as well as public bombast, was "miscast as The Dark Knight." From the start, the *Globe & Mail*, Black's competitor, took the position that he was right and Chrétien was wrong, calling the Prime Minister's "apparent use of his own high office to settle a score with a powerful critic" a piece of "arrogant despotism." But the judge, without hearing testimony, ruled that "any question about the propriety of the Prime Minister's motivation is for Parliament and the electorate, not for the courts." Black appealed.

A few months after that, in August of 2000, the commentators who had been lamenting the concentration of newspapers in the hands of one man were startled to find that they had suddenly lost a topic: Black sold most of his Canadian newspapers, including half of the *National Post.* Black has said that his intention had been to sell only Hollinger's small-town papers—that would have brought in about a billion Canadian dollars to reduce a long-term debt that had apparently become worrisome—but by the time the negotiations were over Black's three-and-a-half-billion-dollar Canadian newspaper empire was just about gone. The buyer was the Asper family, of Winnipeg, whose patriarch, Israel Asper, while no left-winger, was a friend of Jean Chrétien's and a former leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party.

However sound the sale was as a business deal—some saw it as a shrewd selloff at the right moment; some saw it as a sign that Hollinger was in trouble—it was widely regarded as a retreat for Conrad Black, who was not at the press conference announcing it. Although Black insisted that the sale had nothing whatever to do with the argument over his peerage, most of the commentators disagreed. In *Maclean's*, Peter C. Newman, a Black biographer, wrote, "His flight from Canadian investment reflects Black's strong feeling that while he is honoured elsewhere (i.e., being offered a British title), the one audience whose applause has so far eluded him is from his own country."

Black's retention of a half-interest in the *National Post* was considered by some a way to save face, but he assured both the public and the loyalists on the staff that, under the deal, he would retain complete editorial control for the first five years of the partnership. With constant encouragement from the *Post,* a new conservative party, the Canadian Alliance, had been formed, building on the base of the populist Reform Party, which had been viable only in the western provinces. Although the upset winner of the new party's leadership election, Stockwell Day, wasn't Black's candidate, the *National Post* led the chorus of voices proclaiming that Day—a youthful-looking and energetic born-again Christian—would bring a freshness to Canadian politics which contrasted with the aging and colorless Chrétien.

Stockwell Day turned out to be a disaster—an inspiration for the sly ridicule that may be a concomitant of the tall-poppy syndrome in Canada or may simply be a national gift. He was the sort of candidate who stood at Niagara Falls to say that Liberal policies had caused Canadian talent to flow to the United States like the Niagara River, only to be reminded by just about every paper in the country the next day that the Niagara River flows from the United States to Canada. He was dealt a great blow by Rick Mercer, a television satirist, who during the same campaign period asked candidate George W. Bush how he felt about being supported by Prime Minister Poutine of Canada and was told, "I appreciate his strong statement. . . . And we'll work closely together." (Chrétien had not, of course, been replaced suddenly by a man whose name was identical to a French-Canadian dish that consists of French fries with gravy and cheese.) Noting that the Canadian Alliance platform favored referenda, Mercer used his TV show to suggest a referendum mandating that Stockwell Day change his first name to Doris. Through E-mail, he got hundreds of thousands of signatures overnight.

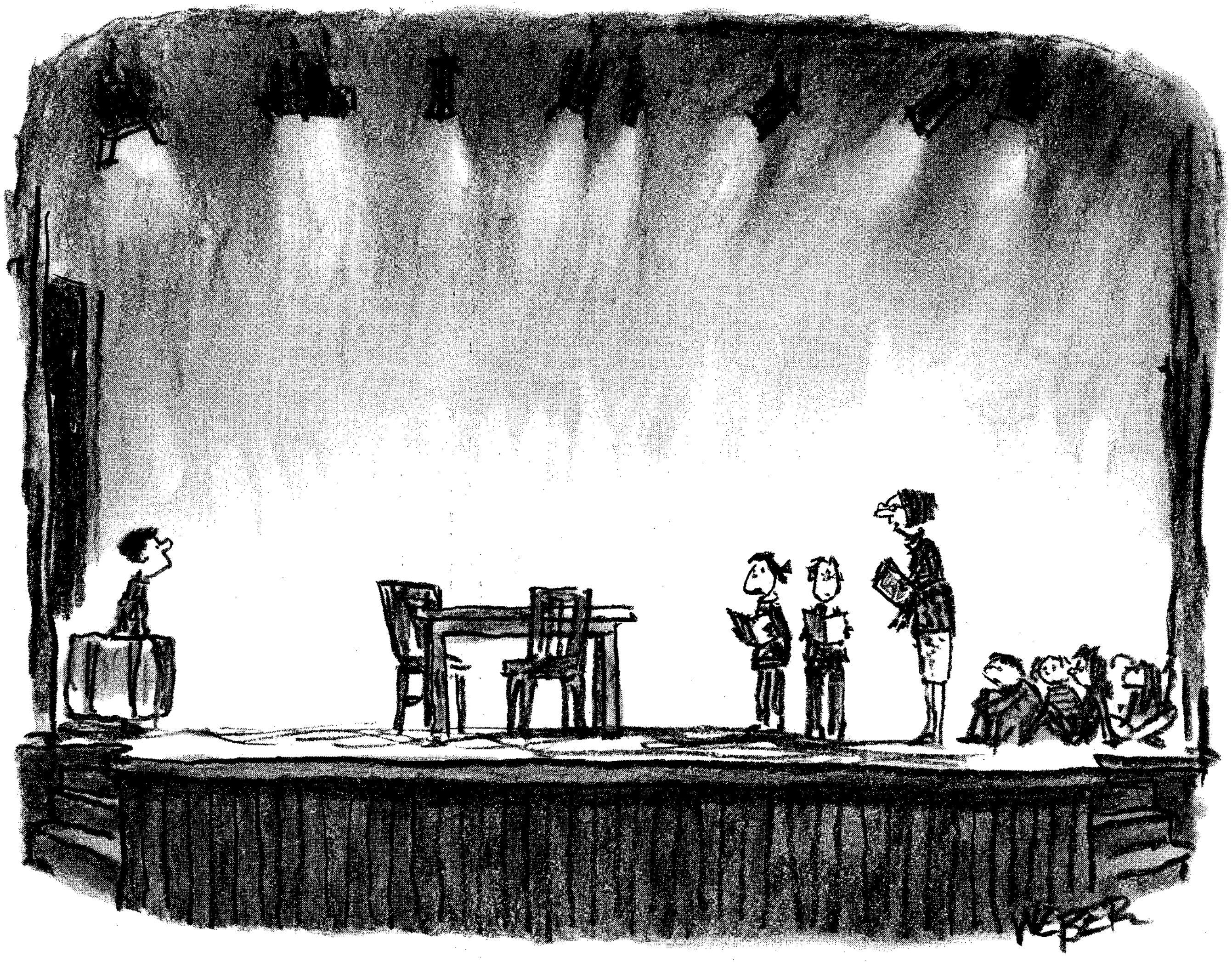
The Canadian Alliance was swamped in the election, and Day proved to be so inept as the leader of the Opposition that a number of Canadian Alliance M.P.s left the caucus. Eventually, he became widely known as Stockboy Day, although some people continued to call him Doris. By May of this year, when the appeals-court decision on Conrad Black's case against Jean Chrétien was finally handed down, it had become obvious that the Canadian Alliance was not going to be the vehicle to realize Black's dream of engineering a Thatcherite revolution in Canada. As Rick Salutin, a left-of-center columnist for the *Globe & Mail,* put it recently, Black "built the flagpole and raised the flag and the country didn't salute."

The appeals court upheld the original decision. According to Peter Atkinson, Hollinger's general counsel, he advised Black that an appeal to the Supreme Court could mean years more of litigation, even assuming the Court agreed to hear the case. Black had said more than once that he would not renounce his Canadian citizenship, just for a peerage, but, Atkinson has said, "if he really wanted the peerage, in this lifetime, there was no alternative." Right after the appeals decision, Conrad Black formally announced that he was giving up his Canadian citizenship. He issued a statement saying, "Having opposed for thirty years precisely the public policies that have caused scores of thousands of educated and talented Canadians to abandon their country every year, it is at least consistent that I should join this dispersal." A *Globe & Mail* piece quoted Black as saying that he would "take back" his citizenship when Canada had a different administration. It also said that, according to citizenship officials, regulations permit former Canadians to reapply for citizenship status after a year of residence in the country.

Three months later, Black sold the rest of the *National Post* to the Asper family. He was widely seen as having abandoned the ruins of a conservative movement that he, more than anyone, had put together. "What finally triggered Mr. Black's departure was the dispute over his bid to be elevated to Britain's House of Lords," Lawrence Martin wrote in the *Globe & Mail*. "He leaves ideological brethren stunned and hurt. They figured that he would have fought the battle longer, that his mission was perhaps as important as the money."

Some people on the *National Post* felt betrayed by Black—"I suggest that they contemplate spending two hundred million dollars founding and launching a paper," he said—but Ken Whyte, the *Post's* editor, said that many were grateful for "the remarkable ride." Within a few months, the *National Post* had been greatly slimmed down, resulting in the layoff of a hundred and thirty people. There was some sympathy in the Toronto newspaper community for those who had been jettisoned from the *Post*, but it was also said in the provinces of the odious soft left, "They kept preaching that the market should decide everything, and finally the market decided something about them."

"Some of us may have been amused, or baffled, that he would want a peerage so badly he was willing to renounce his Canadian citizenship for it," the *National Post* columnist Christie Blatchford acknowledged in an otherwise adulatory column on Conrad Black published the day after he sold his remaining stake to the Asper family. As Allan Fotheringham, a much less sympathetic columnist, said in *Maclean's*,



*"O.K., Willy, drag yourself to the table and collapse in despair. Enter Biff."*

WINES
Wm Hamilton

*"If it's really his private reserve, what's it doing for sale?"*

• •

why would Black "covet a spot in the pastureland of chinless wonders, spavined foxhunters and one lord who was caught selling cocaine in the pristine corridors of Westminster?" Asked that question not long ago, a woman in Toronto who has known Black for many years answered in a very few words: "Pomposity and self-importance." English journalists tend to be equally succinct: "Black wants to be called Lord. It's as simple as that." Some people in Toronto's journalism community see Black as a fundamentally intelligent man who was brought down by a flaw—called pomposity or grandiosity or "his great-man thing"—that made him vulnerable to a wily *gars* like Jean Chrétien. "The most brilliant of men faced the most ordinary of men and he lost," a great admirer of Black's said recently. "And he was made to look like a fool."

"He did want it," Barbara Amiel had written in *Maclean's* not long after her husband's appointment was blocked by Jean Chrétien. "We live in England. He cares about policy issues and has a remarkable sense of history. Playing a role in the House where Lords Denning, Disraeli and Carrington had spoken thrilled him. . . . The only parliamentary debates that have any real substance are found in the House of Lords." Black himself has said that for a man who wanted to play a role in politics and didn't want to run for public office—remember what happened when Citizen Kane tried that—the Lords "would be the only opportunity I would ever have to be any kind of legislative person." Beaverbrook stands as an example of how an impressive figure from the Lords might even be asked to join the Cabinet, assuming the Tories someday manage to get rid of Tony Blair. Although no one would claim that the House of Lords is at the center of British politics—its power does not extend much beyond the ability to delay legislation—the Blair reforms that rid it of most of the hereditary lords, a group in which the chinless-wonder and spavined-foxhunter quotient presumably ran pretty high, have made it seem somewhat less antiquated. The House of Lords is also thought of as a good club—convenient, food no more revolting than at most British clubs, a lot of retainers saying "m'Lord" all the time—but the members, particularly now that Blair names the bulk of them, are more likely to be Labour Party donors or trade-union officials than the sort of people Conrad Black has always liked to have to dinner. The name that attracted notice on the list Black was dropped from in 1999 was that of a Southeast London community worker who had been born in Grenada. Contemplating the demographics of the House of Lords these days, John Fraser, who has been watching Black climb in and out of limousines since they were eleven years old, said recently, "It will be Conrad's first opportunity to meet ordinary people."

And why was Jean Chrétien, who had never shown any interest in titles before, so intent on denying Black this opportunity? Simple vindictiveness? The Prime Minister's office has insisted that the Canadian Honours Policy Committee eventually decided that a Canadian's sitting in the House of Lords would not be "compatible with the ideals of democracy as they have developed in Canada." Chrétien has also hinted at times that he was irritated at what he saw as an effort to sneak the appointment through without his knowledge. A couple of commentators have been tempted by the thought that the Prime Minister might have been, at least symbolically, moving around toy soldiers of his own—maybe plastic soldiers on the oilcloth of a modest kitchen table. As the game is played in this version, Conrad Black is denied a peerage and, being Conrad Black, counterattacks instead of retreating. He might even go to court. When all political and legal avenues are closed, he, still being Conrad Black, renounces his citizenship in order to advance toward his objective, as Roy Thomson did years before. But the laws of Canada make it difficult for a noncitizen to own a newspaper. Black has to withdraw from the *National Post* and, *voilà*, there goes Chrétien's only significant opposition.

Such a turn of events was apparently

one of the many scenarios that had occurred to Chrétien's advisers, but it was not the basis of the Prime Minister's intervention. On purely political grounds, the decision would not have required an elaborate plot: In a country that prizes populism and suspects people who put on airs, it comes to light that the most prominent conservative is in line for an honor he desperately wants. The man in question is seen by many of his countrymen as a swaggering élitist who has expressed nothing but contempt for them, describing them with phrases like "whining, politically conformist welfare addicts." He has caused the Prime Minister a lot of grief. The Prime Minister is in a position to grant or deny this man the honor, which most voters consider silly at best. In the words of a former Chrétien aide, "What's the downside of saying no?"

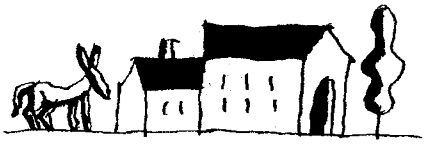
Once the renunciation of Canadian citizenship had made Chrétien's *non* irrelevant, Black was quickly back on the peerage track. On October 31st, dressed in a red robe with ermine trim, he entered the chamber of the House of Lords, in between the similarly berobed Baroness Thatcher and Lord Carrington, once her foreign secretary. They listened to the reading of the Letters Patent from "Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Our other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith," who had formally raised "Our right trusty and well beloved Conrad Moffat Black, member of Our Privy Council for Canada, Officer of the Order of Canada, to the state, degree, style, dignity, title and honour" that go with being Lord Black of Crossharbour, Crossharbour being a part of London near the *Daily Telegraph* offices. It was not completely lost on those who remained Canadians that the ceremony had taken place on Halloween; there were a few jokes on that and other aspects of Black's induction in a meeting of the Liberal caucus. The *Globe & Mail* ran a picture of Lord Black, in his robe, on the front page. The *National Post's* coverage included two pieces and a formal portrait of the new Lord and Lady Black, posing in one of the House of Lords' panelled rooms. On one side of them was Margaret Thatcher. On the other side, it almost goes without saying, was Henry Kissinger.

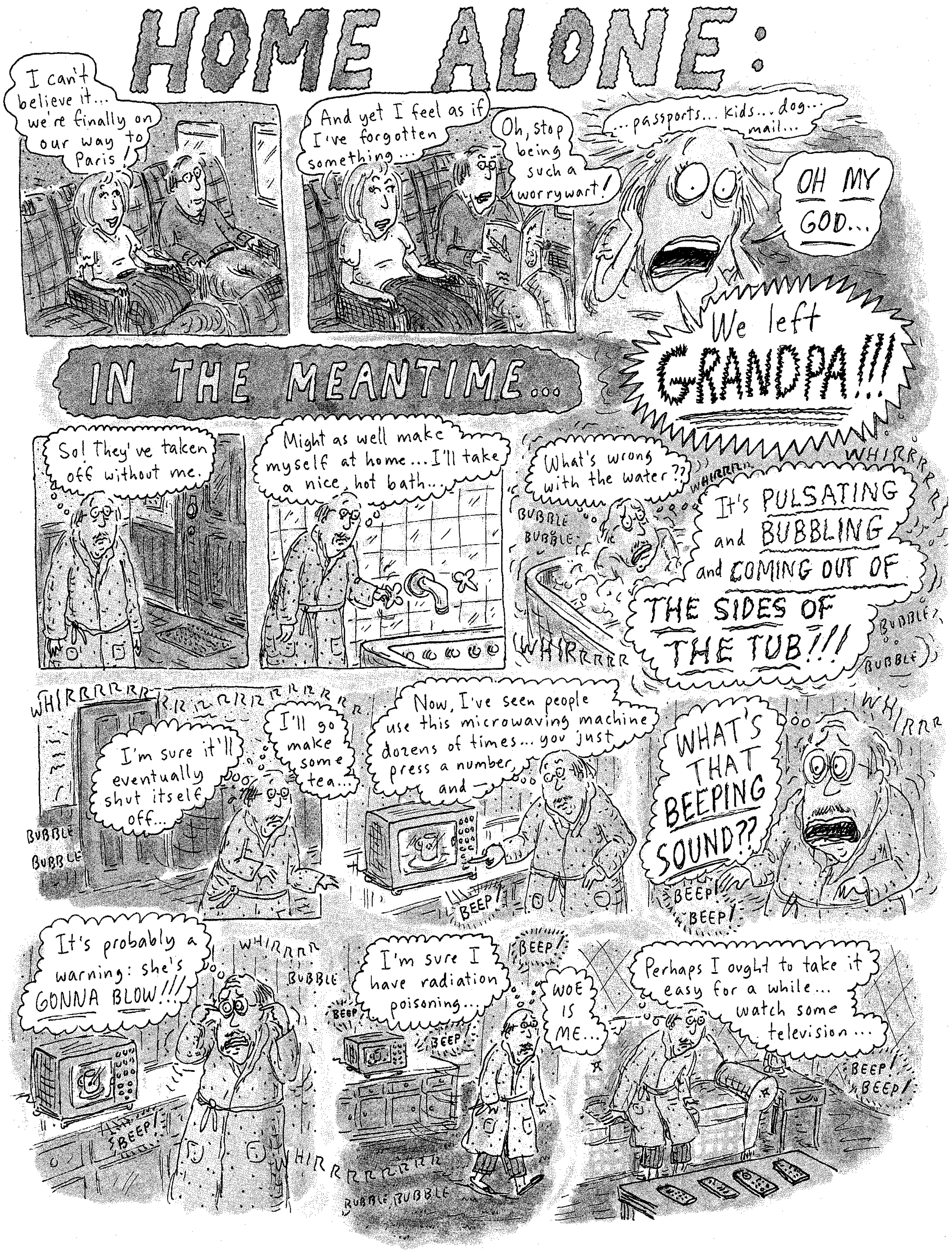
In Hollinger's New York offices, a place with men's-club furnishings and framed autographs of historical figures, a couple of weeks after his induction, Conrad Black was cordial and not the least rumbustious. But he was quite unwilling to accept the generally accepted version of the saga surrounding his peerage. The argument over becoming Lord Black had nothing at all to do with his withdrawal from Canada, he said—not even with his sale of the remaining half of the *National Post*, since the Canadian-ownership law could always be finessed by putting the paper in trust to his children. (His general counsel, Peter Atkinson, has said that, given the level of scrutiny and the presence of a hostile Parliament, restructuring the business to get around the law "would have been very tough.") Black strongly rejected the notion that he had "abandoned the *Post* and fled the land," as one English paper put it. "I was fiercely desirous of throwing a brick in that little central-opinion-formation media pond in Toronto—the *Globe & Mail*, the Toronto *Star*, the CBC, and, to a lesser degree, *Maclean's* magazine—that foists upon the country this false consensus of running things just somewhat to the left of the United States, a fundamentally and radically mistaken policy in my opinion," he said. "So it gave me the utmost pleasure to cause them the level of discomfort that we did. We certainly got an alternate view out there. The problem with that was it's clear that, barring some horrible economic calamity, a majority in Canada are too profoundly seduced by this view of the country as a kinder, gentler, caring, and sharing society and a sort of peacekeeper and social worker to the world."

Black said that he "never took the Alliance all that seriously" and was "never under any great illusion" that his alternative view of Canada would carry the day. It was worth a try, he said, but he was off to greener pastures, having sold his holdings for commercial reasons and put his pet project, the *National Post*, in the hands of the people most likely to assure its survival. He maintains that he can always go back to Canada; in fact, he still carries the special passport he was issued as a member of the Privy Council, whose members, he said, can be non-Canadians—"the Duke of Edinburgh, for instance." The only aspect of the peerage battle that Black would accept as a factor in his withdrawal from his native land was the court decision, in that it reflected "the complete abdication of the judiciary" to the power of what he considers a one-party state.

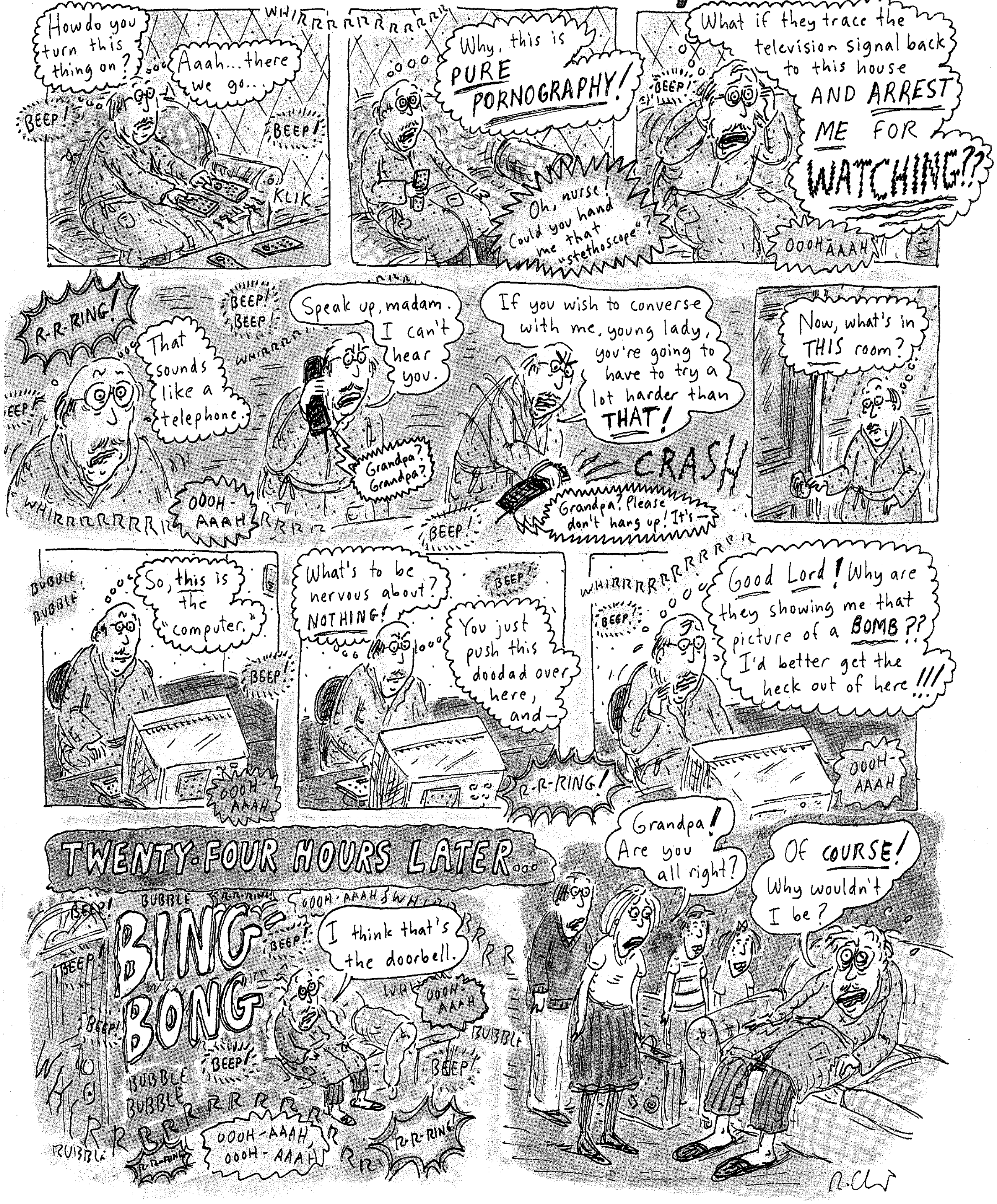
Actually, he said, the notion that he desperately wanted a seat in the House of Lords was simply not true. "It's all surmise," he said. "It is a conventional wisdom that is not actually based on anything other than . . . people's conception of me being much more preoccupied with that sort of thing than I am." Without having to be reminded that this was conventional wisdom believed by his most loyal employees, his lawyer, and his wife, Black went on, "Of course, I do want it up to a point, but I was not ever prepared to commit indignities to achieve it. There are ways of generating these things, but I never lifted a finger to make it happen."

And the renunciation of his citizenship, which many Canadians find extreme, or even offensive? Black said that even that was not the result of wanting to be Lord Black of Crossharbour. "It was a combination of things," he said. "As the brain drain amplified itself and the currency plunged to new lows, I saw these polls showing that sixty per cent of Canadians were pleased with Chrétien as Prime Minister. And then literally the last straw was the formerly distinguished court just rolling over for the regime. I thought the last act of dissent I could make was to renounce my citizenship, and that it would be inconsistent for me not to do it. Now, with that said, of course it was convenient that that was also the ticket to the House of Lords." ♦




HOME ALONE:
I can't believe it... we're finally on our way to Paris!
And yet I feel as if I've forgotten something...
Oh, stop being such a worrywart!
...passports... kids... dog... mail...
OH MY GOD...
We left GRANDPA!!!
IN THE MEANTIME...
So! They've taken off without me.
Might as well make myself at home... I'll take a nice, hot bath...
What's wrong with the water??
WHIRRRR
WHIRRRR
BUBBLE BUBBLE
It's PULSATING and BUBBLING and COMING OUT OF THE SIDES OF THE TUB!!!
BUBBLE BUBBLE
WHIRRRRRR
WHIRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
I'm sure it'll eventually shut itself off...
BUBBLE BUBBLE
I'll go make some tea...
Now, I've seen people use this microwaving machine dozens of times... you just press a number, and—
BEEP!
WHAT'S THAT BEEPING SOUND??
WHIRRR
BEEP! BEEP!
It's probably a warning: she's GONNA BLOW!!!
WHIRRRR
BUBBLE
BEEP!
BEEP!
I'm sure I have radiation poisoning...
BEEP!
BEEP!
WOE IS ME...
WHIRRRRRRRRR
BUBBLE BUBBLE
Perhaps I ought to take it easy for a while... watch some television...
BEEP! BEEP!

# The Final Chapter


How do you turn this thing on?
BEEP!
Aaah...there we go...
WHIRRRRRRRRRRRRR
BEEP!
KLIK
Why, this is PURE PORNOGRAPHY!
Oh, nurse! Could you hand me that "stethoscope"?
What if they trace the television signal back to this house AND ARREST ME FOR WATCHING??
BEEP!
OOOH AAAH
R-R-RING!
BEEP! BEEP!
That sounds like a telephone.
WHIRRRR
BEEP!
WHIRRRRRRRRRR
OOOH-AAAH
Speak up, madam. I can't hear you.
Grandpa? Grandpa?
If you wish to converse with me, young lady, you're going to have to try a lot harder than THAT!
CRASH
Grandpa? Please don't hang up! It's—
BEEP!
Now, what's in THIS room?
BUBBLE BUBBLE
So, this is the "computer."
BEEP!
OOOH AAAH
What's to be nervous about? NOTHING!
BEEP!
You just push this doodad over here, and—
R-R-RING!
WHIRRRRRRRRRR
BEEP!
Good Lord! Why are they showing me that picture of a BOMB?? I'd better get the heck out of here!!!
OOOH-AAAH
TWENTY-FOUR HOURS LATER...
BEEP! BUBBLE R-R-RING! OOOH-AAAH WHIRR
BING BONG
BEEP!
I think that's the doorbell.
OOOH-AAAH
BUBBLE
BEEP!
BEEP!
BUBBLE BUBBLE
BEEP!
BEEP!
RRRRRRR
OOOH-AAAH OOOH-AAAH
R-R-RING!
R-R-RING!
RUBBLE
Grandpa! Are you all right?
OF COURSE! Why wouldn't I be?
R. Chast

ANNALS OF MEDICINE

# INDIA'S PLAGUE

*Cheaper drugs may help millions who have AIDS—but how many will they hurt?*

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

Late on an autumn afternoon a little more than a year ago, a nattily dressed chemist named Yusuf K. Hamied strolled into a conference room at the headquarters of the European Commission, in Brussels. He carried in his briefcase a simple proposition, and, in delivering it to the politicians, health ministers, and international pharmaceutical executives who were gathered there, he dispensed with the pleasantries and dry language so common in conversations about regulation, drug pricing, and global-tariff regimes. "Friends," he began, although he was fairly sure he had none in the room, "I represent the needs and aspirations of the Third World. I represent the capabilities of the Third World, and above all I represent an opportunity." It was time, he said, for the people who control the earth's resources and its capital to face up to their "responsibility to alleviate the suffering of millions of our fellow-men who are afflicted with H.I.V. and AIDS."

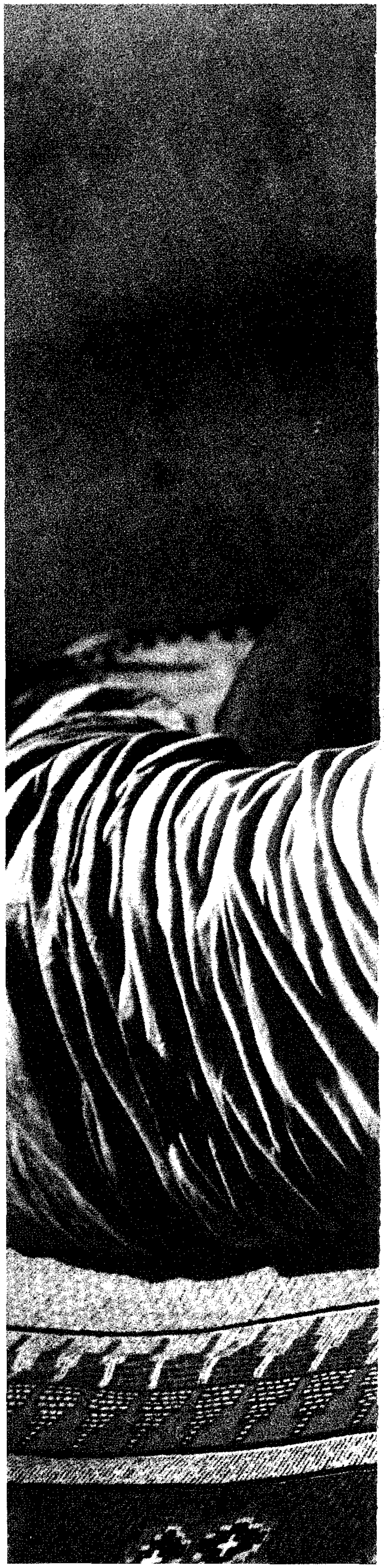
Speeches like this one have become standard in the era of globalization. But Yusuf Hamied is not the average do-gooder campaigning for a more equitable world. He is one of India's most successful businessmen. He lives in (among other places) Windsor Villa, the Bombay home where Salman Rushdie was raised, and he earned a Ph.D. from Cambridge at the age of twenty-three. His father, who was also a chemist, and who helped start India's first national university, at Mahatma Gandhi's request, became rich by importing a popular sexual tonic from Germany. In 1935, he used the profits to start Cipla, the giant pharmaceutical house that the younger Hamied now runs.

Yusuf Hamied wasn't in Brussels to talk about money. He was there because he was scared. Over the past few years, he had become convinced that his country was edging into an AIDS apocalypse every bit as severe as the one that has engulfed Africa. With the possible exception of South Africa, there is no country on earth where more people are infected with the AIDS virus than India. By last fall, Bombay, where Cipla has its headquarters, was competing for the dismal honorific of AIDS capital of the world, with more than two hundred and fifty thousand H.I.V.-positive inhabitants.

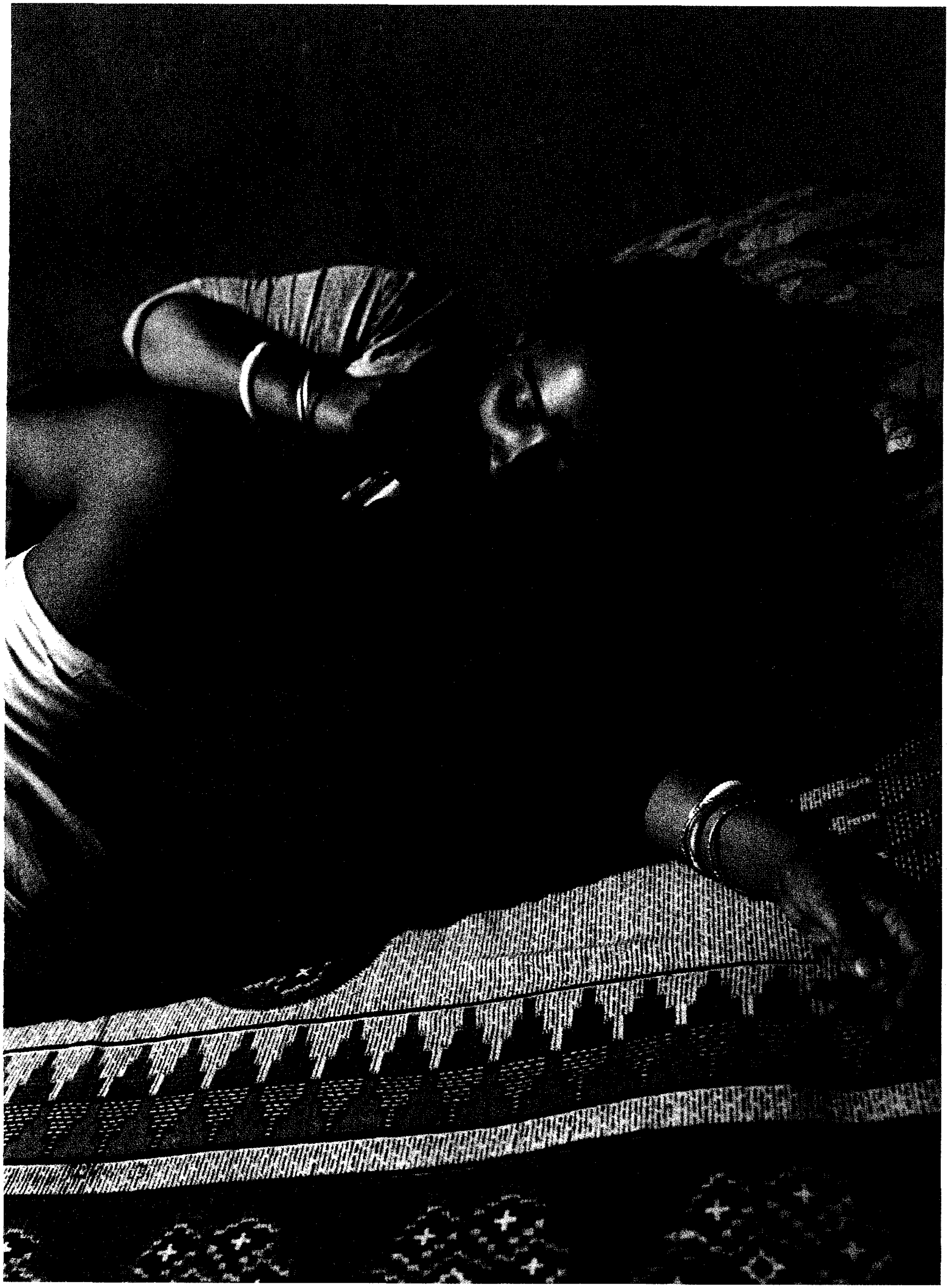
Hamied laid down a challenge for the officials he addressed that day: start selling drugs at prices that the poor can afford or I will do it for you. It wasn't an empty threat. The Indian government long ago decided that only the *process* used in making a drug could be patented; the final product itself could be copied freely. In the West, Cipla is regarded, with not a little bit of rancor, as one of the great pirate enterprises of the corporate world—a company that flaunts international convention, routinely copies the molecular formulas of new drugs, and then sells for pennies in India what would cost a hundred times as much in Europe or America.

Hamied ended his speech in Brussels by reading a list of drugs that his company makes and the low prices he now intended to charge for them. Soon after returning home, he offered to donate supplies of a drug called neviraprane to the Indian government; when it is taken at the beginning of labor, neviraprane has proved to be remarkably effective at preventing the AIDS virus from being passed from mother to child. The government declined. In December, Hamied made his offer again—to the Prime Minister personally. This time, he heard nothing.

Then, on the morning of January 26, 2001—India's Republic Day—the state of Gujarat was struck by the most devastating earthquake in the country's history; at least thirty thousand people died, and seven hundred



*A prostitute and her customer in Calcutta.*



CONTACT

grant workers who come to the big cities are at high risk for AIDS, and more likely to spread it. Photograph by Zana Briski.

thousand were left homeless. "Somehow, that just really woke me up," Hamied told me when we met in New York this summer, in his suite at the Palace Hotel. It was a muggy day, and from his lounge on the forty-seventh floor we watched as storm clouds danced around the building. "I sent medicine, and I was happy to do it," he went on. "But afterward I sat down with my top managers and I said, 'Look at what the hell is happening in our country. AIDS is the worst tragedy this country could ever experience—with the possible exception of a nuclear war—and it is a completely foreseen tragedy. Why are we all donating for Gujarat and doing nothing about this great plague?' I decided right then that, if I had to, I would do it by myself. People think this is all about Africa, but it's not. For me, it's about my own home."

So Hamied went out and started a revolution. Thanks to Cipla, a year's worth of crucial AIDS medication that until recently sold in America for more than fifteen thousand dollars is now available in many parts of the Third World for three hundred and fifty dollars. Multinational pharmaceutical giants condemned Hamied. "Stealing ideas is not how one provides good health care," Shannon Herzfeld, a spokeswoman for the American pharmaceutical industry, said last year.

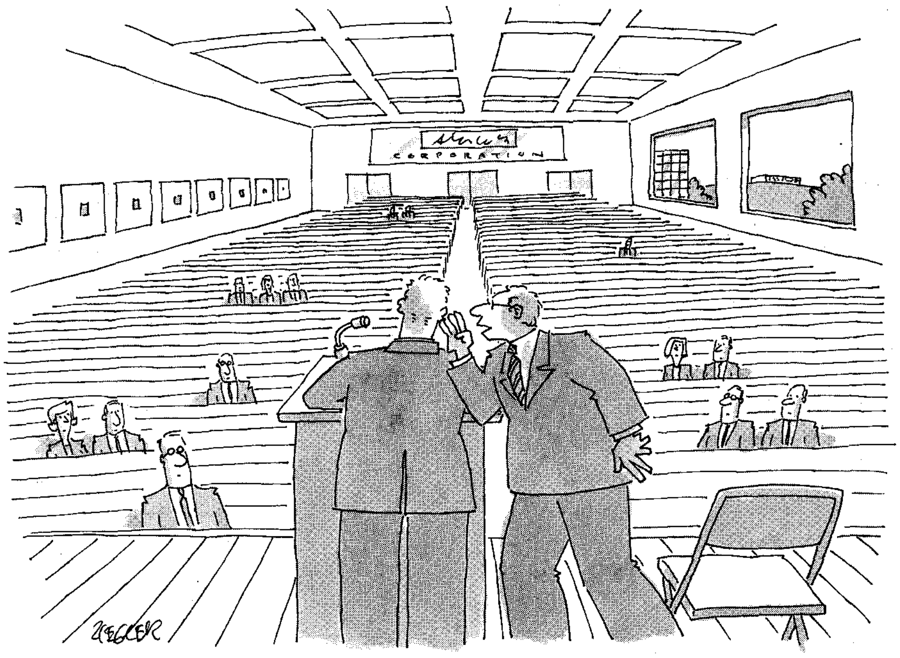
Yet the big companies have also realized that clinging to patent laws during an international plague is bad for business, and the impact of Cipla's decision has been extraordinary. Entire countries have shifted the focus of their public-health systems—simply because AIDS treatment suddenly seems affordable. Led by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the United Nations this past summer held its first General Assembly meeting devoted solely to a disease. Soon afterward, the heads of the Group of Eight leading industrial nations met in Genoa and committed themselves to spending twelve billion dollars on AIDS, as protesters rioted in the ancient streets around them. This spring, a group of well-known Harvard professors released a lengthy document in which they, too, argued that it is no longer morally permissible for the West to deny patients in the world's poorest countries AIDS drugs that could prolong their lives. From Africa to Brazil, Hamied and his crusade for access to these drugs have been embraced as a symbol of hope by activists who believe they are engaged in a global war against apartheid in health care.

The clamor has been so intense that few public-health officials have dared to say publicly what many believe: that it makes far more sense to try to prevent H.I.V. than to focus on treating it. The reasons are obvious: prevention averts the sickness and death that AIDS inevitably causes; many AIDS drugs are not only expensive but complicated, toxic, and difficult to take correctly. In addition, in countries like India—where per-capita spending on health care is about ten dollars a year, and where the government is committed to using public funds to finance it—placing emphasis on any costly treatment is hard to justify when scores of health problems that could be cured cheaply and easily are so common. Last year in India, there were more than 1.1 million reported cases of malaria; filaria, a parasitic nematode, which blocks the lymphatic system and causes serious swelling, is epidemic; Japanese encephalitis, which is spread by the Culex mosquito, is endemic and kills many children; yaws, a contagious, disfiguring infection, has been prevalent in India for years and is easily cured with a single shot of penicillin. Each year, there are two million new cases of tuberculosis; more than a thousand people die from it every day. India also accounts for seventy per cent of the world's leprosy. Statistics like these tend to make Indians weary—and unwilling to listen when they are told that the latest disease to afflict them is the most dangerous.

"In America, there is an endless discourse about risk: which kids are at risk, what are the health risks, how do we guard against them?" says Mark Koops-Elson, an anthropologist at the University of Chicago who is writing his dissertation on India's cultural and financial attitudes toward risk and health. "Which diseases are worse than others? There is no such conversation in India. Given the vastness of the problems that people in India face and the poverty that exists, most people just say our responsibil-

*"Your Honor, may I point out to the court that my client pleaded guilty to wrongdoing but not evildoing."*

ities lie with those who are closest to us. Trying to fix the entire society is too overwhelming."



*"Cut a few thousand jobs here, boss, a few thousand jobs there, and they start to add up."*

## II

I flew into New Delhi at the beginning of June, almost twenty years to the day after the Centers for Disease Control, in Atlanta, published the first words about what would become the AIDS pandemic—an account of five unexplained cases of *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia among gay men in Los Angeles. Since then, twenty-two million people have died and forty million live with the infection, most of them too poor to receive even rudimentary palliative care. In its early years, AIDS was an absolute and fairly rapid death sentence. In 1986, however, hope for a prolonged life emerged when the drug AZT, or zidovudine, was shown to delay the degenerative effects that the virus has on the immune system. AZT was the first of a new class of antiretroviral drugs that work by suppressing the ability of H.I.V. to reproduce. This helps maintain the integrity of the immune system and postpones the development of opportunistic infections, which are often the cause of death in people afflicted with AIDS. Among Americans today, the prevailing view is that the AIDS epidemic has begun to wane. That is not true. Each day brings at least sixteen thousand new infections throughout the world. As many as one-quarter of them are in India alone.

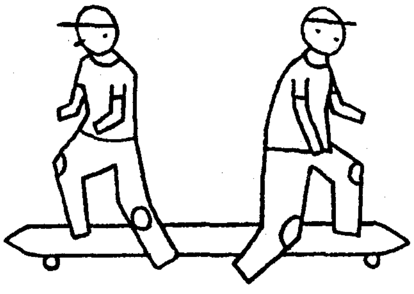
The first cases of AIDS in India were not reported until 1986, in Bombay and in the southern industrial city of Madras, and until then there had been every hope that the nation would avoid the devastation that has occurred in countries like Zimbabwe and Botswana, where at least a quarter of the adult population is now infected with H.I.V. After all, it was said, the Indian family is remarkably close and sustaining. Surveys often show that Indian men, once they are married, are more likely to remain faithful than men from many other cultures; furthermore, half of Indian women marry by the age of eighteen, and more than ninety per cent are still virgins when they do. In much of Africa, on the other hand, there is little stigma attached to sexual promiscuity, and the incidence of venereal disease—which is a reliable barometer for the presence of H.I.V.—has always been high. In addition, despite the fact that half a billion people in India live on less than a dollar a day, millions of others are members of a rapidly growing middle class. The streets of Delhi, Madras, and Bombay are not simply overrun with beggars; they are also filled with motorcycles, schoolchildren in crisp blue uniforms, and eager businessmen toting laptops and riding to work in motorized rickshaws.

But prosperity itself—the new mobility, rising income levels, and the excellent system of national highways—has played a role in exacerbating the crisis. During the past twenty years, India has become one of the great migration centers of the world, and migrant populations are at a higher risk for AIDS. They are also more likely to spread the disease. There are at least a hundred thousand long-haul truckers shuttling back and forth across the subcontinent, more than two million prostitutes, two hundred and seventy-five thousand brothels, and tens of millions of seasonal workers who come to the big cities for a few months each year. AIDS travels along the truck routes as efficiently as white blood cells do along the arteries of the human body—and one can trace the evolution of the epidemic with eerie accuracy simply by comparing traffic patterns moving out of major cities with the rates of infection of people who live along the way. In parts of Nepal, H.I.V. is called Mumbai disease (Mumbai is the Hindi name for Bombay), because the people who contracted it uniformly went to work in the great city and came home sick. And, because there is a lag of many years between infection and any visible sign of illness, the epidemic can grow unnoticed until it is simply too large to control.

Not long after I arrived in Delhi, I stopped by the office of Swarup Sarkar, who is the head of the United Nations AIDS program for South Asia. Sarkar had just returned from a brief visit to Bangladesh, where the epidemic is spreading slowly, and he was planning a trip to the Burmese border, where it is much worse. He gave me a cup of tea and we sat down in front of his computer with a CD full of data, some colorful maps, and a few very disturbing suggestions about the future health of his country. On charts tracing the course of the epidemic as it moved through India, the country was shown in different colors, depending upon the prevalence of infection. A child would have been able to follow the coded patterns: the earliest map, from 1986, was mostly pale, indicating low levels of contagion; by 1990, a bright yellow had begun to appear in abundance. That color represented high-risk groups—gay men, sex workers, drug users—at least five per cent of whom had been infected. The numbers have been inching upward for years, but studies have shown that once the rate of infection among women who are tested in birth clinics rises above one per cent, it becomes nearly impossible to keep an epidemic like H.I.V. from seeping into the rest of the population. That is what is now happening in many parts of India. Red represents pockets of infection that have grown beyond that one-per-cent figure. The maps that Sarkar showed me from 1986 to 1990 had no red in them; by last year, much of the country, from Manipur, in the northeast, to Kerala, at the southern tip of the continent, was awash in crimson.

The course of the epidemic in India closely resembles the early pattern in Thailand, where infection spread almost exclusively among heterosexuals. Yet the differences in official policy couldn't be greater. In the mid-nineteen-eighties, H.I.V. hit Thailand with force, and within a few years the government had prepared an aggressive campaign of information targeted directly at the people who were most at risk, preventing hundreds of thousands of new infections. But such success costs money, and requires commitment. Thailand spends more than sixty cents per person on H.I.V., whereas India spends a little less than six cents, or sixty million dollars a year—in other words, only twice what Thailand spends, although India's population is sixteen times as large. From the king to local village leaders, Thai officials have made many public statements about the dangers of H.I.V. and about how the disease is spread. In India, in part because of a national reluctance to speak publicly about sex, nothing like this has happened. No movie stars appear at fund-raisers, no prominent politicians admit to being gay. No mayor would visit a hospice. India desperately needs a Rock Hudson or a Magic Johnson. "We had very few cases for years," Sarkar said. "It was possible to do something, and all we did was watch." In the nine years between the first cases of AIDS in the United States and the real beginnings of the epidemic in India, fictions and theories evolved to suggest that Indians were immune to H.I.V., that they had protective genes and simply couldn't get sick in the same way that Africans or Europeans did. By 1994, however, it had become clear that such conjecture was nonsense. Meanwhile, the maps kept getting darker.

Sarkar, who is forty-eight, looks like a middleweight wrestler. His principal job is to help the United Nations formulate and carry out its AIDS policies; but, like virtually all countries that have been seriously affected by AIDS, India has consistently sought to minimize the extent of its problem. Not long ago, Prasada Rao, who runs India's National AIDS Control Organization, complained publicly that the estimate of four million H.I.V.-infected Indians, which is frequently used by the United Nations and the World Bank—a figure that most experts consider very conservative—was "too high and not based on any sound epidemiological evidence." No public-health official with experience in India believes that, and most think Rao himself knows better. When I first met Rao, I asked him the question that has so alarmed AIDS experts throughout the world: Did he think India would become another Africa? "I was afraid for a year or two when I began my job," he said. "But I no longer have that fear. We are aware of the problems, and we are working hard to address them. I think it's clear that we have begun to succeed."



When I told Swarup Sarkar about my conversation with Rao, he simply shook his head in sorrowful acceptance. "We have told ourselves so many lies," Sarkar said. "The government says offi-

## THE KISS

The mossy transom light, odors of cabbage
and ancient papers, while Father Feeney
polishes an apple on his tunic.
I tell him I want the life priests have,
not how the night sky's millions
of departing stars, erased by city lights,
terrify me toward God. That some nights
I sleepwalk, curl inside the bathtub,
and bang awake from a dream of walking through
a night where candle beams crisscross
the sky, a movie première somewhere.
Where am I, Father, when I visit a life
inside or outside the one I'm in?
In our wronged world I see things
accidentally good: fishy shadows thrown
by walnut leaves, summer hammerheads
whomping fireplugs, fall air that tastes
like spring water, oranges, and iron.

"What are you running from, my dear,
at morning Mass five times a week?"
He comes around the desk, its failing flowers
and Iwo Jima inkwell, holding his breviary,
its bee's hum mysteries in a Latin
whose patterned noise, like blades
on ice, became a cranky poetry

I was lost to. Beautiful dreamer,
how I love you. When he leans down,
his hands rough with chalk dust
rasp my ears. "You don't have the call,"
kissing my cheek. "Find something else."

On the subway home I found
a Golgotha air of piss and smoke,
sleepy workers, Cuban missiles drooping
in their evening papers, and black people
hosed down by cops or stretched by dogs.
What was I running from? Deity flashed
on the razor a boy beside me wagged
and stroked the hair of the nurse who waked
to kiss her rosary. I believed the wall's
filthy cracks, coming into focus
when we stopped, held stories I'd find
and tell. What are you running from,
child of what I've become?
Tell what you know now
of dreadful freshness and want,
our stunned world peopled
by shadows solidly flesh,
a silted fountain of prayer
rising in our throat.

—*W. S. Di Piero*

cially that there are 'only' four million infected Indians." He repeated the words. "*Only four million.* Possibly they are correct. But every time we have said the epidemic was limited, or not spreading as fast as in other places, we have been proved wrong. What is scary is that we don't have any reason to say that we are seeing numbers that have reached a plateau. It would be very surprising to think that the AIDS epidemic has stabilized in India, where at least seventy-five per cent of the population gets no education. No intervention. Nothing. Whether it will suddenly have another jump"—as the epidemic did in many places in Africa—"we simply cannot say."

## III

Late one steamy night in the middle of June, I drove to the Pukkenthrui truck stop, which is about an hour out of Madras and just five miles from the spot on National Highway 47 where, in 1991, Rajiv Gandhi was killed by a suicide bomber. The monsoons were about to begin, and the ripe, heavy smell of tamarind rolled across the humid roadway. My guide was Nobin Jos, a thoughtful young man who runs the Trucker-Highway Community Health Project, an AIDS-education program that has such limited resources that the drivers use sawed-off logs by the road for seats during meetings. Steady traffic pounded the battered highway as we passed the city's broad, festering slums. Most Indian cities, because they are extremely congested, don't permit big trucks to enter during the day, so truckers move at night. It was a moonless evening, and as we started to pick up speed I saw a string of women standing by the side of the road, slowly waving red flashlights at the cars driving by. Eighteen-wheelers lined the shoulder.

"They are lonely and ignorant men, but they are desperate for work," Jos told me after we arrived at the truck stop and stood watching his colleagues give a brief lecture on AIDS to the assembled drivers. (There were demonstrations with a wooden penis on how to use a condom, which was cause for great merriment among the startled drivers.) When they are available, a package of three condoms costs less than one rupee (about two cents), but not many men see the point of spending the money. None of the drivers spoke English. But Jos, acting as an interpreter, helped me talk with a few. We sat at a roadside restaurant, next to a military hotel, where flatbread baked in a kiln and we were served a dark, chalky tea in plastic jugs. The men wore turbans, N.B.A. T-shirts, and towels around their waists. Some were toothless, others were barefoot, and all of them were eager to chat. I was surprised by how few had heard of AIDS. None had any basic understanding of the epidemiology of the disease. "I only have sex once a week on the road," a man from north of Bombay told me. Then he added, I think for what he assumed would be my approval, "And I always take a bath with lime water afterward."

During nearly a month spent travelling through cities and towns with a combined population far larger than that of France, I noticed only two posters advertising condoms. One ad on a billboard in Madras, which featured an alluring woman, said simply, "Look before you sleep." (I had no idea that this was an AIDS advertisement until I was told. It could just as easily have been about buying a decent mattress.) The only Indian television commercials that talk about H.I.V.—in Hindi and in English—were paid for by Cipla, not by the government; they are extremely well produced, but they dwell on the fact that new treatments make AIDS a disease that people can finally combat. Explicit messages about how one becomes infected are almost completely absent. Abstinence is neither preached nor practiced. India has a rich sexual history, but outside its biggest cities it remains deeply conservative, and public discourse about sexual conduct is limited.

While I was in Delhi, my driver was a sweet, middle-aged man from a northern hill town. Like tens of thousands of other such men, he returns to his village to see his wife and children no more than three or four times each year. I never had the nerve to ask him what he did about sex the rest of the time. Statistically, at least, the answer is clear: one study of seven hundred Tamil truck drivers showed that the percentage of those infected with H.I.V. rose from 1.5 per cent in 1995 to more than six per cent just two years later. By last year, more than twenty per cent of the drivers were infected—a figure with ominous echoes of the early epidemic in Africa, where AIDS made the inevitable leap from groups like truck drivers and prostitutes into the wider population. Many experts find it hard to believe that India can avoid a similar fate. "Even the most conservative government estimates predict that in seven years there will be at least ten million people infected with H.I.V. here," Subhash Hira told me. He is the director of the AIDS unit at the noble, decrepit Sir J. J. Hospital, in Bombay, and a professor of infectious diseases at the University of Texas's medical school, in Houston. "This is a heterosexual epidemic with the potential to destroy this society and decimate our economy. And nobody seems to be terribly concerned."

Perhaps because the epidemic first appeared in Madras and Bombay, those cities have made the best efforts to deal with it. One morning, Suniti Solomon collected me at my hotel and drove me to her bright, tidy clinic on Raman Street in Madras. She is a short, soft-spoken woman, who treated the first AIDS cases in India and has probably seen more patients than any other infectious-disease specialist in the country. I spent most of the morning with her, first talking about AIDS and then sitting in on a counselling session. A barefoot woman with eyes the color of coal, hair coiled to her waist, and rings on nearly every toe crept into the office. She was thirty but looked younger. The woman had been selected randomly to participate in a health survey using residents from thirty of the nine hundred and forty-five slums in Madras. In exchange for answering a series of questions about her health and giving blood for research, she would receive free care (paid for by the National Institute of Mental Health, in the United States, which sponsored the studies). The woman's anxiety was obvious. She lived in a slum near the beach that borders the Bay of Bengal. She had been feeling weak and dizzy, and had been unable to make it through her usual eighteen-hour day. "My husband pulls a rickshaw," she told Solomon, an almost preternaturally reassuring woman. "He does not want me to be at this clinic." She said that he had been treated before for sexually transmitted diseases, and had recently become quite ill.

"Do you know whether he has H.I.V.?" Solomon asked.

"What is that?" the woman replied blankly, staring at the wall clock, afraid of what would happen if her husband got home before she did. After she left, the doctor explained that the woman was in a "love marriage"—which among slum dwellers in southern India is still not common. It suggests a certain independence on the woman's part; if the marriage had been arranged, she would probably never have had the resolve to come. "We will know in a day if she is infected," Solomon told me. "But it will be hard to persuade her husband to come in to be tested or to permit her to be treated—even though it will cost him nothing." Doctors have to deal with this problem every day, in every city. Of all the obstacles that physicians and AIDS agencies face in India, nothing is as discouraging as the plight of women. New brides are usually illiterate and are exposed to AIDS by the most highly valued factor in Indian culture: monogamous marriage. "Ninety per cent of my women who are H.I.V.-positive have a single partner, and that is their husband," one of Solomon's colleagues, at another hospital in Madras, told me. "I always say to them, 'Don't match your horoscopes for marriage. Please match your blood tests.' But it's hard to enforce. Imagine a girl's parents asking a boy's parents for a blood statement. Not in India; that will never happen."

In many parts of the country, a woman is regarded as a relatively valuable farm animal; her health matters only because she is required to raise children and keep house. "No husband would allow a wife to go alone for an examination outside the immediate slum," the sociologist Radhikha Ramasubban told me. "A woman has to have another woman, an older person, or a man act as an escort." Ramasubban has been studying the health of women in the slums of Bombay for years. "Nobody is willing to free them from household duties, child-minding duties. And what is that one visit going to do? Even if you can get them to go, they won't make the follow-up. And then the test, and the confirmation for the test. And going back for consultation. With tuberculosis, social workers used to go to their houses to find out if they had taken their medicines. With H.I.V., the treatment is far more complicated, and it must go on for life. Who is going to attempt that here? It's such a hopeless task."

## IV

It is only after spending some time in India's government hospitals that one can fully understand that the debate about access to the most advanced AIDS therapy, though good-hearted, is beside the point. The hospitals are depressing because they are filled with dedicated, well-trained doctors who don't have enough money to do their jobs properly. At several facilities that I visited, needles are routinely bleached and used more than once, medical instruments are sterilized in giant soup pots, and patients had better hope that a family member or friend will bring them food if they want to eat. At the Hospital of Thoracic Medicine, just south of Madras, a former tuberculosis clinic that has become a vast government holding pen for hundreds of people infected with H.I.V., antiretroviral drugs are not offered or discussed; neither is aspirin. The patients are treated with as much compassion as an overburdened staff can muster, and that's about it. As one nurse explained to me, "In America, you may do an MRI scan every time somebody has a headache. We can't even take X-rays when somebody breaks a bone."

Suniti Solomon's Y.R.G. center, in Madras, presents a different and more complex picture. Y.R.G. is the biggest AIDS clinic in southern India, and it is probably the best one in the country. So far, eleven thousand patients have passed through it (not all of them H.I.V.-positive). With the help of foreign aid money and many donated drugs (from Cipla and other companies) and grants for research, patients receive counselling, testing, nutritional guidance, and what palliative care there is to offer. Doctors treat the many infections that H.I.V. can cause; they also explain the more fundamental powers of antiretroviral drugs, which are often available to those who can afford to pay up to two thousand dollars a year. Only about one patient in ten attempts to use the medicine.

In the past five years, the treatment for AIDS has had to become more complex in order to match the sophistication of the virus, which quickly learns to evade the effects of a single drug. Standard care has moved far from the days when AZT was the drug of choice; each patient must now take an assortment of medicines, which work together to suppress the virus. The therapeutic cocktail is called HAART (highly active antiretroviral therapy), and a patient has to take at least three drugs a day; it also requires constant monitoring and medical attention. The treatment can dramatically improve an infected person's prospects for a healthy future, but it must be fine-tuned frequently and taken for life. For many of Solomon's patients, it is simply not an option.

Y.R.G also has a ward at a local hospital. The day I was there, the staff was struggling to deal with a long line of emaciated people waiting for help. N. Kumarasamy, who works with Suniti Solomon, keeps his medicines in metal gym lockers in the hallway—they serve as his pharmacy. In order to provide AIDS drugs, he takes whatever he can get; the occasional grant from a pharmaceutical firm or a few dozen doses of AZT brought back by a friend from an international conference. Kumarasamy was educated at Johns Hopkins, among other places, and when Solomon asked him to direct the health-care clinic he agreed without hesitation. "Lots of our patients come from other, pretty good clinics," he told me. "Doctors see them as a liability and a waste of time. They are going to die, it's an expensive disease to treat, so why bother? You have no idea how many famous people fly from Delhi so that they don't have to be treated in their own town. The first thing they ask is 'Do you recognize me?' We always say no."

The clinic—a former leprosy center that had been abandoned—is open and warm, but, even here, the stigma that surrounds AIDS in India remains. If you ask for Y.R.G. at the hospital reception desk, the clerk will look at you differently than if you were to ask for any other ward. This is typical. In Delhi, I had spent a morning in a leafy suburb at an AIDS group home owned by a prominent politician. It was lovely—light and filled with children, mothers, and the smell of curry coming from the communal kitchen. The man who owns the house has no idea that it is used as an AIDS-care center. If he did know, he would undoubtedly evict the group at once. Still, there is plenty of suspicion about the house in the neighborhood. No laundry man will go there, nor will fruit venders or trash collectors. Children steer clear of it. "They all look away when we walk down the street," one H.I.V.-infected mother told me when I visited. "Nobody will even look at our faces."

The stigma of the disease makes it hard for doctors and aid workers to do their jobs, but the obstacles that confront the patients themselves seem almost Biblical in their severity. "One day, this man came to see me," Solomon told me. "A nice man, caring. He is a landlord and owns acres and acres. His only son is positive. Of course, people came to him and sought to arrange a marriage, and he kept telling everyone, 'No, no, my son has to study and isn't ready for marriage.' And finally his own sister brought her daughter, which in south India is very common. She said, 'You can't do that, my brother, you have to marry your son to my daughter. It's only right.' So he told her the truth: 'My son has H.I.V., and I don't want your daughter to get sick.' He saw the change in his sister's face, and she walked away without a word. His wife, who had been hiding behind the door, heard what he said, and she told their son. The mother and child dressed in their best clothes and went out and bought poison powder in bulk. They drank it together and got into the car. Then the son drove as fast as he could into a big tree and killed them both. After that, the father came to me—his life was ruined. He said, 'All I have done is try to save my niece from getting H.I.V., and now I have lost everything.'

"It was a very, very hard moment for me. I just left the office and went home. I have a dog, and I tell him things I would never say to a human being. So through my tears I told him all about the man who tried to save his niece."

For Solomon and her staff, the stress is almost unbearable. She spends half her day fighting denial; the rest of the time, she must explain to her patients why drugs so commonly available in other countries remain too expensive for them. It is a difficult and often contradictory task: she knows as well as anyone that while drug treatment won't solve India's AIDS problems, it could help focus more attention on the implications of the epidemic. Indeed, one of the strongest arguments for providing expensive treatment to poor countries is that without it people will have no reason to learn if they are infected and no reason to change their behavior. But a simpler and cheaper approach would save more lives.

"I hear these people in the West talk-

AUNA
Shanahan

*"You're incredibly tight."*

ing about what we should have all the time," Solomon said. "For us, it's not about patents and pharmaceutical giants and money. It's about our poverty, which is profound. If I were offered drugs or food, I would take the food, because I know it will give my patients a better quality of life. I would do that even if the drugs cost nothing. You have to distribute drugs, and they need to be used by the right date. You have to take eight glasses of water a day with some of them. You have to store some of them in a refrigerator. Nobody has a refrigerator here. On top of all this, there will be resistance developing to the drugs. People will take them as long as they can afford them, then they will stop."

Resistance develops when patients fail to complete the full course of treatment, and that can cause more harm than not taking a drug at all. (It is for this reason that tuberculosis has returned to such deadly prominence throughout the world.) Resistance makes it possible for any virus to gain resilience and power. "Look at penicillin," Solomon said. "In 1949, if you took one hundred strains of staph, penicillin killed them all. Every one. Today, if you take the same one hundred strains, ninety-nine of them will survive because of indiscriminate use. You think that won't happen with H.I.V.?" In fact, in America it is already happening. One recent study, based in San Francisco—which has some of the world's most sophisticated medical facilities, experienced AIDS doctors, and motivated patients—predicts that by 2005 nearly half of all H.I.V. patients in the city will fail to respond to the drugs they currently use to treat the disease. When resistant strains of H.I.V. are passed on to others, the people who have been infected have a much harder time from the start and are less likely to respond to conventional treatment. "People will become resistant, and the disease will redouble its power," Solomon continued. "All the while, people will be getting the message that there is a cure, and they will carry on having sex without condoms. Drugs used the wrong way kill people—and they are used the wrong way all the time. We have to get more training. Food. Clean water. Give us condoms, for God's sake. Teach women to read. But keep your drugs. They really won't help us now."

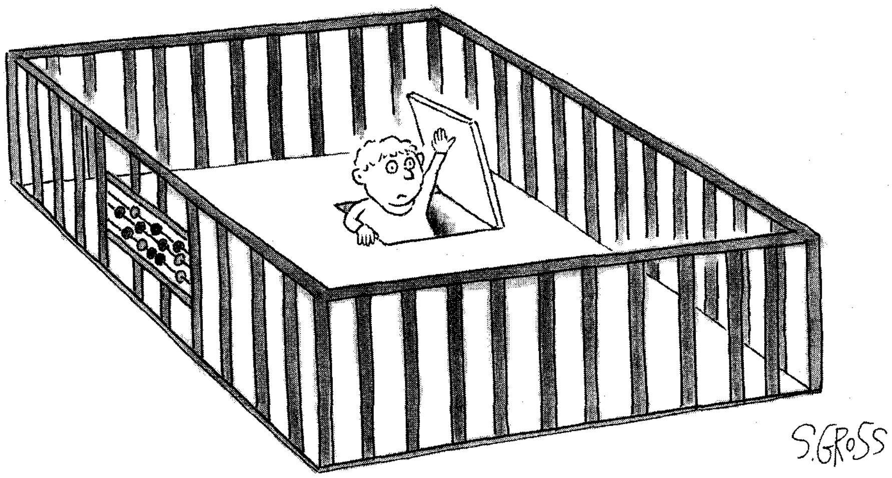
## V

The most important question about Yusuf Hamied's personal revolution has also been the most difficult to confront: Is the movement for affordable AIDS treatment, which Cipla almost accidentally came to represent, actually pulling attention and money away from the vaccines and preventive strategies that in India are most likely to save millions of lives? More than five times as much money is spent treating sick people as is spent keeping them healthy in the first place. And much of that money is spent on people who are on the verge of death. Can that be fair? One reason the debate between prevention and treatment has always been so difficult is that sick people are easily identified, they have names, and their suffering can be acute. Who would want to ignore such pain? Money spent on prevention, on the other hand, is often used to protect people we don't even know. The public is vast and vulnerable, but it does not have a face or a name. (This is one of the reasons that AIDS-prevention efforts are so often weak. In the United States, for example, several hundred million dollars in federal funds is dedicated each year to prevention and education programs, whereas seven billion dollars annually is allocated for AIDS treatment.)

One is not supposed to make calculations like these, because they explicitly attach a cost to a human life; such thinking is considered callous and particularly unfair in an age of global wealth beyond measure. Nevertheless, we attach costs to human lives every day; in the United States, we know that lowering the speed limit by ten miles an hour would save thousands of lives each year, yet, as a society, we feel it's worth that price to travel that much faster; we also know that alcohol and tobacco are responsible for much sickness and death. We don't ban them, because we are willing to pay the price for the pleasure they provide.

AIDS activists insist that the potential devastation of the illness is so great that we cannot afford to make a choice between preventing the disease and treating the sick; whatever the cost, we must do both. But an essential question is often left unasked: What approach would help people in the poorest countries most? The Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs has argued, for example, that if Americans contributed three billion dollars a year to combat AIDS in Africa, it would solve many problems and amount to only "about $10 a year for every American, the cost of a movie ticket with popcorn."

But would it? The idea that a small sacrifice from wealthy Western countries can alleviate much misery in places like Africa and India is comforting, of course, and it has become a first principle for the world's many health politicians. "These distinctions between preventing AIDS and treating it are criminal," Siddharth Dube, who has consulted for U.N.A.I.D.S. and the World Health Organization, told me. Dube was raised in Calcutta and has frequently written about AIDS and the health problems of India. "We are not living in the medieval ages, where a continent can be wiped out by the plague and nobody knows about it anywhere else. That we can know all this and yet do nothing is the most remarkable fact of our time. . . . AIDS is not watches or jewelry or software. Peo-



ple are dying. There are drugs, there is unimaginable wealth in this world, and the people who have the money are refusing to help. It's that simple."

Nothing about AIDS is simple, though. Providing treatment for even a minority of sick people comes at the expense of preventing many others from falling ill. It is true that many countries now permit local pharmaceutical firms to ignore patents and make some medicines more cheaply. But discussing any price reductions of these drugs is meaningless in countries like India, where poverty is so acute that the government can't afford them. When I was in Delhi, for example, Indian officials were debating whether to add the hepatitis-B vaccine to their program for children—because it costs sixty-five cents a shot, and not ten cents, like other vaccines. How can you argue about whether it's worth spending fifty-five cents to save a life and then begin to talk about spending immense sums on an extremely complicated treatment for a disease that cannot be cured?

*"Oh! Homework."*

• •

The reality that the spread of AIDS could be greatly reduced through governmental effort has been routinely ignored by politicians in nearly every country. To focus on AIDS is to acknowledge the potential devastation the epidemic can cause, and politicians have rarely done that. What elected leader would wish to associate himself with a national calamity, particularly if it occurred on his watch or could largely have been avoided? This was as true in the United States in the nineteen-eighties and in Kenya and Zimbabwe in the nineteen-nineties as it is in India, China, or Cambodia today. "At all stages of the AIDS epidemic, politicians find reasons not to invest in prevention," Martha Ainsworth, a World Bank economist, told me. Ainsworth, along with her colleague Mead Over, wrote "Confronting AIDS," the best book on making economic decisions about handling the epidemic. "At the beginning, you take countries like India or Russia, and nobody is really sick. They have tens of thousands dying of tuberculosis every year. Nobody wants to spend scarce resources on AIDS, because it takes years to go from infection to illness. And then you get later into the epidemic"—when millions of people can be visibly, disturbingly sick—"and everyone is demanding treatment. It is much less controversial to treat somebody who is sick than to talk about homosexuality, drug abusers, prostitution, sexual habits, or social mores.

"In parts of the world today, millions of people need treatment," Ainsworth continued. "When you then say, 'We are going to protect you by making sure that prostitutes and their clients use condoms and that drug users have clean needles,' people say, 'Don't spend money on them. They cause the problem.'"

Yet the effect of focussing prevention efforts on high-risk groups like prostitutes and truck drivers cannot be disputed. It costs three hundred rupees to avert one trucker's infection in India with targeted education programs and the distribution of condoms. That is about six dollars. For sex workers, the cost is less than three dollars. No treatment approach makes as much sense. Not long ago, Andrew Natsios, the Bush Administration's chief of U.S.A.I.D., said that it wouldn't pay to buy a complicated set of antiretroviral drugs for Africans, because they are people who "don't know what Western time is" and thus cannot take the drugs on the proper schedule. His comments were patronizing and untrue, and he was condemned for them. If, however, he had said that most Africans shouldn't use the drugs because they are so toxic that they are difficult to take regularly and, if not taken regularly, might create increased resistance and actually *worsen* the epidemic, he would still have been condemned. But he would have been right. Indian officials and Western health philanthropists have been forced into a nearly impossible position by the increased availability of cheaper AIDS drugs. Nobody has been placed more squarely in this vise than Prasada Rao, the director of the Indian AIDS program. "In a just world, there would be enough money available so that you wouldn't have to pick and choose between prevention and treatment," he told me. "But today that world does not exist, and that money is not available. When it comes to treatment with antiretrovirals, we don't have a thousand dollars for a patient. We don't have a hundred dollars. We don't really have ten dollars. This is something that doesn't seem to register in the West. The model of Brazil"—where the government will pay for antiretroviral drugs—"doesn't work here." Brazil's per-capita income of $5,029 is eleven times India's, and Brazil spends twenty times as much per person on health care. India has a much bigger AIDS problem than Brazil does, and significantly fewer resources.

"They are wasting their money," Rao said. "They are spending three hundred million dollars every year to treat one hundred thousand people. This is ridiculous. This is a figure nobody quotes. You may think I am unkind to say this, but it would be wrong, it would be even criminal, to take that money and spend it on one hundred thousand Indians. If you spend for some on antiretroviral drugs, whom do you choose? Do you save the mothers so they can spend more time with their children? Do you go for the élite class, who run the cities? When you spend money on these people, you are implying that others can die. Because that is what this drug movement is all about. This talk of denying people treatment. Look outside my window." His office is on the grounds of the government health complex, in Delhi, a grim park filled with families looking for miracles that doctors can't provide. "They are dying of malaria, of diarrhea, of leprosy. There are thousands of the blind. And AIDS is important, even more important. But you can't tell me we should ignore everyone so that we can serve a few people. Not in this country."

Almost as an afterthought, Rao added, "What we need is a vaccine. We need attention paid to the nine hundred and ninety-five million Indians who are not infected with H.I.V." Vaccines are among the world's most effective health interventions. Millions of lives are saved each year by a standard package of cheap vaccines that reach three-quarters of the world's children. However, there is little incentive for companies to invest in them. As the Harvard economist Michael Kremer has written, "Despite recent scientific advances which have increased the feasibility of developing malaria, tuberculosis, and AIDS vaccines, global R&D on these vaccines is woefully inadequate."

Vaccine development is hampered not only by science—or even principally by science—but also by market forces and liability issues. When I asked Seth Berkely, the president of the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, about the scientific obstacles that stand in the way of developing a vaccine, he acknowledged that there were many, but then said, "What would happen if tomorrow we had an H.I.V. mutation that started to spread by the respiratory route in the United States? Well, we would all work 24/7, and we would throw a ton of money at the problem."

AIDS primarily affects poor countries, however, and, twenty years into the epidemic, there has been no such all-consuming effort to produce a vaccine. Most pharmaceutical companies believe that they will have a hard time selling enough vaccine in places like Africa or India to recoup their research costs. There is an irony here: research suffers because it is a global public good—and an extremely costly one—in which no single country has sufficient incentive to invest. As desperate as South Africa, India, and China are, it's not realistic to expect the governments of these countries to put up five or ten billion dollars for vaccine research, particularly before it's possible to know whether this research will succeed. Kremer has been the most eloquent advocate of creating a global system that would allow countries to buy vaccines in advance—in other words, of guaranteeing companies a market for their investment. That way, there would be a reason for them to take the risk.

"We must treat those who are sick with compassion and with whatever medicine we can provide," Rao told me before I left his office. "But the answer has to be in the form of a vaccine. After all these years, I can't think of anything more profoundly frightening than spending billions of dollars on drugs and making the epidemic worse."

## VI

"I make drugs," Yusuf Hamied told me when I asked him whether it made sense to focus so heavily on treatment rather than on prevention. "I can only do what I do."

With a billion people living in Hamied's principal market, it is natural to wonder if the potential sale of H.I.V. drugs, and the profit it would bring in India, interests him. "We have four hundred products, and the AIDS drugs are twelve of them," he told me. "You must understand my philosophy in life. For the year ending March 31st, our turnover was two hundred and twenty-seven million dollars. A profit of thirty-three million net, after tax and after everything, you see. It's just my wife and I. We have no children. We are very rich. Even in the first six months of this year, our sales were up twenty-five per cent over last year. I'm not a revolutionary. I'm a businessman. But, really, how much money do you think I need?"

Hamied is an unlikely person to call himself an Indian nationalist, but he often does. His father, who died in 1972, was a Muslim from Aligarh, and his mother was a Lithuanian Jew. They met in Germany in 1925, while Hamied's father was studying chemistry. Hamied has a place in Mauritius, is fond of Hong Kong, and travels frequently to New York. But he spends most of his time in a quiet, sun-drenched apartment not far from the center of London.

When I went to see Hamied, he was eager to share the yellowed treasures of his life—pictures of his Lithuanian grandparents, who died in the gas chambers, and one of the day, in 1939, when Gandhi came to visit Cipla in Bombay. There was a picture of Zakir Husain, who was India's third President and one of Hamied's father's closest friends. There were also many pictures of Hamied, his younger brother, Mohammed, who helps him run the business, and the conductor Zubin Mehta, with whom he grew up, in Bombay. For more than fifty years, he and Mehta have remained as inseparable as two men who live mostly on airplanes and different continents can be. It was after riots erupted between Muslim and Hindu residents of Bombay, in 1984, that Hamied and his wife decided to find a place in London, though they are still tax-paying citizens of India.

"People who grow up in Bombay can never give up the vision of what it was," Hamied told me during lunch at his favorite Chinese restaurant, near Hyde Park. "But that changed for me completely after the second round of riots, in 1992. In the thirties, my father often worked with this Jewish-run medical company in Germany. In 1938, he went with my mother to Berlin. One day, he was on a train and the Nazis came on and they started to talk to him; they thought he was a Jew and said, 'Shut up, you bloody Jew.' He saw what was happening maybe in a way that people who lived there could not, and he begged all his Jewish friends to get out. They laughed and said, 'We are the intellectual élite.'

"My mother told me this story over and over—how the Jews of Berlin told my father they were safe because they were the intellectuals, the people who made the nation work. She said to always keep that in mind. And in 1992 I felt exactly as if it were 1938 in Berlin. In my own home. Because my name was Hamied. Everything in India is your name. A reporter rang me in the middle of the rioting and asked, 'As a so-called eminent Indian Muslim, what are your views of what is going on in Bombay?' I said, 'Why are you asking me as a Muslim? Why not ask me as an Indian Jew? I am a Jew.' I said, 'Forget Hindu, Muslim, Jew. Let us talk about Bombay. Eight million of sixteen million below poverty. Seven million living on the streets. No water. No home. No sanitation. This is not religious. This is haves and have-nots. That is what is happening in Bombay, in India, and in the Third World. That is our future.'"

After weeks of torrential rains, the sun came out on my last day in India. I left Bombay early in the morning and drove north to one of Cipla's factories, in Patalganga. The slums were alive with people taking advantage of the clear, dry air: kids, soaped up by their mothers, were enjoying their baths in rainwater that had been carefully collected the night before. Barbers with straight razors were at work by six; so were hawkers, prostitutes, and men selling mangoes by the side of the road.

It takes only an hour to ride from some of the world's most crowded slums to the factory, which is filled with antiseptic rooms where hoods and gloves must be worn at all times. Cipla manufactures nearly every major type of antibiotic, as well as nasal sprays, iron chelators, cardiovascular drugs, and antidepressants. The company's factories export to more than a hundred countries. The workers are well paid. Morale is high. I watched the stamping machines as they churned out as many as four thousand tablets every minute. Yet, at the end of each day, Cipla ships its AIDS drugs in bulk to Russia, Africa, Europe, and even to the Gulf of Oman, when, only miles away, people are infected (and will soon be dying) in numbers recorded almost nowhere else. Hamied told me it was his greatest shame. "Our first batch of AZT we had two hundred thousand pills, and we couldn't even give them away in India," he said; the drugs reached their expiration date before the government approved their use. This is just one of many bureaucratic problems facing even someone who has the money and the will to donate drugs in large quantities. Back at the main office, in Bombay, I sat with some of Cipla's scientists and with Hamied's younger brother, Mohammed. He handed me a bottle of pills that contained something called Triomune. It is a combination of three main AIDS drugs—mixed into a single tablet that can be taken twice a day.

Triomune can't be manufactured in Europe or America, because each drug is made and patented by a different company. In those places, this pill, which eliminates much of the complication of the antiretroviral regimen, would clearly prolong some lives and ease the suffering of many patients. But is it the answer for countries like India, China, and Africa? Of course not. Even the increased efficacy of the pills does not change the economic facts: the Indian government can't afford them. The simple cost of shipping the drugs around the country and storing them could equal the money the government spends on treating all other infectious diseases combined. A society that lacks a sophisticated health-care system, and one in which tens of millions of people do not even have access to clean drinking water, needs to focus on prevention. It simply can't afford to start with the most expensive drugs for its most complicated disease.

Hamied understands all that; he told me so more than once. Yet he is a drug manufacturer, and he feels compelled to make his stand. "Maybe it's just a prayer to cling to, but we need the prayer," he said with a sad shrug the last time we met. "What else do we have to offer?" ♦

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# THE CRITICS

## A CRITIC AT LARGE

# EXAMINED LIFE

*What Stanley H. Kaplan taught us about the S.A.T.*

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

Once, in fourth grade, Stanley Kaplan got a B-plus on his report card and was so stunned that he wandered aimlessly around the neighborhood, ashamed to show his mother. This was in Brooklyn, on Avenue K in Flatbush, between the wars. Kaplan's father, Julius, was from Slutsk, in Belorussia, and ran a plumbing and heating business. His mother, Ericka, ninety pounds and four feet eight, was the granddaughter of the chief rabbi of the synagogue of Prague, and Stanley loved to sit next to her on the front porch, immersed in his schoolbooks while his friends were off playing stickball. Stanley Kaplan had Mrs. Holman for fifth grade, and when she quizzed the class on math equations, he would shout out the answers. If other students were having problems, Stanley would take out pencil and paper and pull them aside. He would offer them a dime, sometimes, if they would just sit and listen. In high school, he would take over algebra class, and the other kids, passing him in the hall, would call him Teach. One classmate, Aimee Rubin, was having so much trouble with math that she was in danger of being dropped from the National Honor Society. Kaplan offered to help her, and she scored a ninety-five on her next exam. He tutored a troubled eleven-year-old named Bob Linker, and Bob Linker ended up a successful businessman. In Kaplan's sophomore year at City College, he got a C in biology and was so certain that there had been a mistake that he marched in to see the professor and proved that his true grade, an A, had accidentally been switched with that of another, not quite so studious, Stanley Kaplan. Thereafter, he became Stanley H. Kaplan, and when people asked him what the "H" stood for he would say "Higher scores!" or, with a sly wink, "Preparation!" He graduated Phi Beta Kappa and hung a shingle outside his parents' house on Avenue K—"Stanley H. Kaplan Educational Center"—and started tutoring kids in the basement. In 1946, a high-school junior named Elizabeth, from Coney Island, came to him for help on an exam he was unfamiliar with. It was called the Scholastic Aptitude Test, and from that moment forward the business of getting into college in America was never quite the same.

The S.A.T., at that point, was just beginning to go into widespread use. Unlike existing academic exams, it was intended to measure innate ability—not what a student had learned but what a student was capable of learning—and it stated clearly in the instructions that "cramming or last-minute reviewing" was pointless. Kaplan was puzzled. In Flatbush you always studied for tests. He gave Elizabeth pages of math problems and reading-comprehension drills. He grilled her over and over, doing what the S.A.T. said should not be done. And what happened? On test day, she found the S.A.T. "a piece of cake," and promptly told all her friends, and her friends told their friends, and soon word of Stanley H. Kaplan had spread throughout Brooklyn.

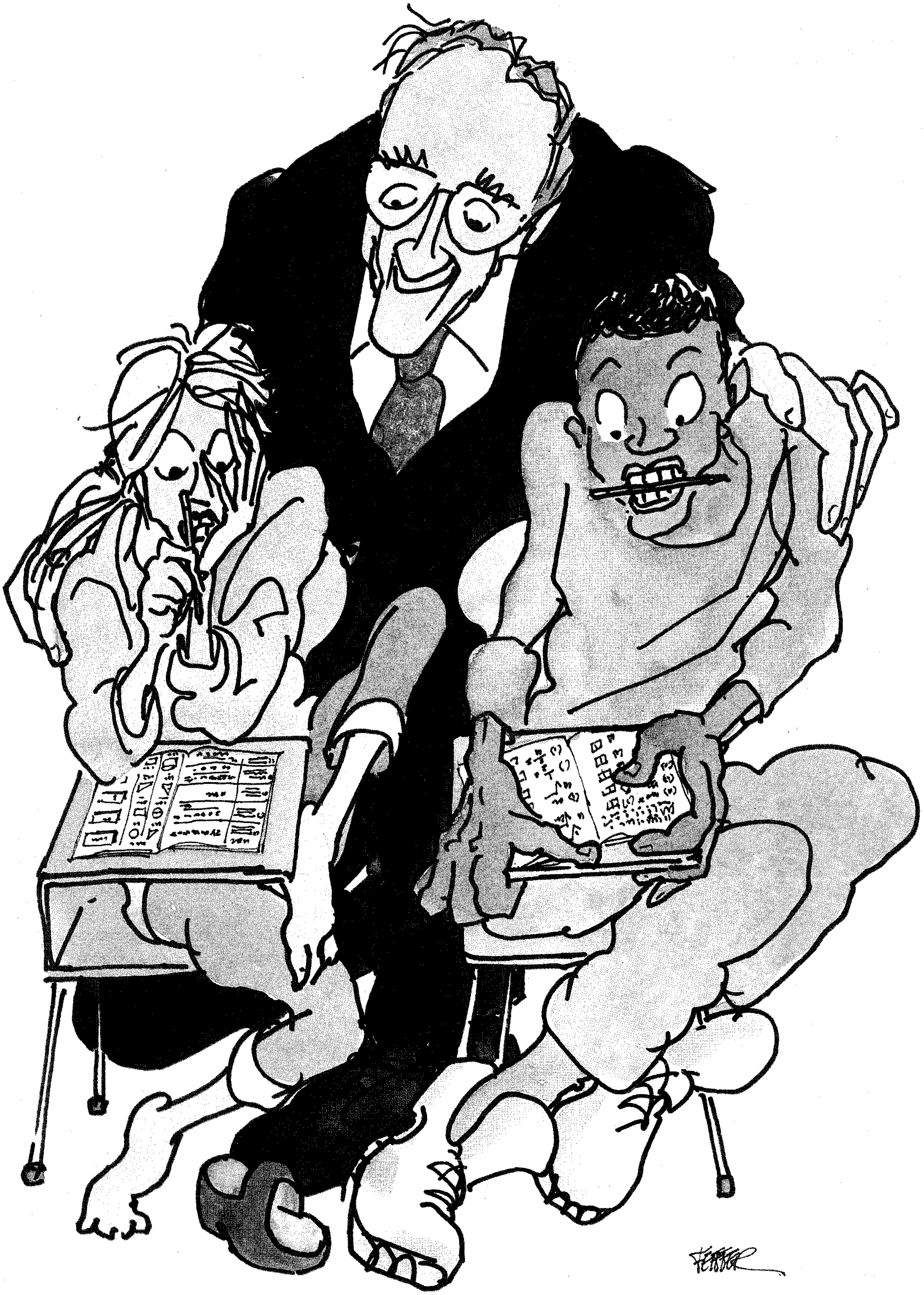
A few years later, Kaplan married Rita Gwirtzman, who had grown up a mile away, and in 1951 they moved to a two-story brick-and-stucco house on Bedford Avenue, a block from his alma mater, James Madison High School. He renovated his basement, dividing it into classrooms. When the basement got too crowded, he rented a podiatrist's office near King's Highway, at the Brighton Beach subway stop. In the nineteen-seventies, he went national, setting up educational programs throughout the country, creating an S.A.T.-preparation industry that soon became crowded with tutoring companies and study manuals. Kaplan has now written a memoir, "Test Pilot" (Simon & Schuster; $19), which has as its subtitle "How I Broke Testing Barriers for Millions of Students and Caused a Sonic Boom in the Business of Education." That actually understates his importance. Stanley Kaplan changed the rules of the game.

The S.A.T. is now seventy-five years old, and it is in trouble. Earlier this year, the University of California—the nation's largest public-university system—stunned the educational world by proposing a move toward a "holistic" admissions system, which would mean abandoning its heavy reliance on standardized-test scores. The school backed up its proposal with a devastating statistical analysis, arguing that the S.A.T. is virtually useless as a tool for making admissions decisions.

The report focussed on what is called predictive validity, a statistical measure of how well a high-school student's performance in any given test or program predicts his or her performance as a college freshman. If you wanted to, for instance, you could calculate the predictive validity of prowess at Scrabble, or the number of books a student reads in his senior year, or, more obviously, high-school grades. What the Educational Testing Service (which creates the S.A.T.) and the College Board (which oversees it) have always argued is that most performance measures are so subjective and unreliable that only by adding aptitude-test scores into the admissions equation can a college be sure it is picking the right students.

This is what the U.C. study dis-

JULES FEIFFER



*"Acquiring test-taking skills is the same as learning to play the piano," Kaplan writes. "It requires practice, practice, practice."*

puted. It compared the predictive validity of three numbers: a student's high-school G.P.A., his or her score on the S.A.T. (or, as it is formally known, the S.A.T. I), and his or her score on what is known as the S.A.T. II, which is a so-called achievement test, aimed at gauging mastery of specific areas of the high-school curriculum. Drawing on the transcripts of seventy-eight thousand University of California freshmen from 1996 through 1999, the report found that, over all, the most useful statistic in predicting freshman grades was the S.A.T. II, which explained sixteen per cent of the "variance" (which is another measure of predictive validity). The second most useful was high-school G.P.A., at 15.4 per cent. The S.A.T. was the least useful, at 13.3 per cent. Combining high-school G.P.A. and the S.A.T. II explained 22.2 per cent of the variance in freshman grades. Adding in S.A.T. I scores increased that number by only 0.1 per cent. Nor was the S.A.T. better at what one would have thought was its strong suit: identifying high-potential students from bad schools. In fact, the study found that achievement tests were ten times more useful than the S.A.T. in predicting the success of students from similar backgrounds. "Achievement tests are fairer to students because they measure accomplishment rather than promise," Richard Atkinson, the president of the University of California, told a conference on college admissions last month. "They can be used to improve performance; they are less vulnerable to charges of cultural or socioeconomic bias; and they are more appropriate for schools because they set clear curricular guidelines and clarify what is important for students to learn. Most important, they tell students that a college education is within the reach of anyone with the talent and determination to succeed."

This argument has been made before, of course. The S.A.T. has been under attack, for one reason or another, since its inception. But what is happening now is different. The University of California is one of the largest single customers of the S.A.T. It was the U.C. system's decision, in 1968, to adopt the S.A.T. that affirmed the test's national prominence in the first place. If U.C. defects from the S.A.T., it is not hard to imagine it being followed by a stampede of other colleges. Seventy-five years ago, the S.A.T. was instituted because we were more interested, as a society, in what a student was capable of learning than in what he had already learned. Now, apparently, we have changed our minds—and few people bear more responsibility for that shift than Stanley H. Kaplan.

### ONE FOOT IN THE DARK

People forget

Don't forget me

You

the only white head

in the crowd of young men

live oaks

waiting to be let out of the Visiting Area

—*Jean Valentine*

From the moment he set up shop on Avenue K, Stanley Kaplan was a pariah in the educational world. Once, in 1956, he went to a meeting for parents and teachers at a local high school to discuss the upcoming S.A.T., and one of the teachers leading the meeting pointed his finger at Kaplan and shouted, "I refuse to continue until THAT MAN leaves the room." When Kaplan claimed that his students routinely improved their scores by a hundred points or more, he was denounced by the testing establishment as a "quack" and "the cram king" and a "snake oil salesman." At the Educational Testing Service, "it was a cherished assumption that the S.A.T. was uncoachable," Nicholas Lemann writes in his history of the S.A.T., "The Big Test":

> The whole idea of psychometrics was that mental tests are a measurement of a psychical property of the brain, analogous to taking a blood sample. By definition, the test-taker could not affect the result. More particularly, E.T.S.'s main point of pride about the S.A.T. was its extremely high test-retest reliability, one of the best that any standardized test had ever achieved. . . . So confident of the S.A.T.'s reliability was E.T.S. that the basic technique it developed for catching cheaters was simply to compare first and second scores, and to mount an investigation in the case of any very large increase. E.T.S. was sure that substantially increasing one's score could be accomplished only by nefarious means.

But Kaplan wasn't cheating. His great contribution was to prove that the S.A.T. was eminently coachable—that whatever it was that the test was measuring was less like a blood sample than like a heart rate, a vital sign that could be altered through the right exercises. In those days, for instance, the test was a secret. Students walking in to take the S.A.T. were often in a state of terrified ignorance about what to expect. (It wasn't until the early eighties that the E.T.S. was forced to release copies of old test questions to the public.) So Kaplan would have "Thank Goodness It's Over" pizza parties after each S.A.T. As his students talked about the questions they had faced, he and his staff would listen and take notes, trying to get a sense of how better to structure their coaching. "Every night I stayed up past midnight writing new questions and study materials," he writes. "I spent hours trying to understand the design of the test, trying to think like the test makers, anticipating the types of questions my students would face." His notes were typed up the next day, cranked out on a Gestetner machine, hung to dry in the office, then snatched off the line and given to waiting students. If students knew what the S.A.T. was like, he reasoned, they would be more confident. They could skip the instructions and save time. They could learn how to pace themselves. They would guess more intelligently. (For a question with five choices, a right answer is worth one point but a wrong answer results in minus one-quarter of a point—which is why students were always warned that guessing was penalized. In reality, of course, if a student can eliminate even one obviously wrong possibility from the list of choices, guessing becomes an intelligent strategy.) The S.A.T. was a test devised by a particular institution, by a particular kind of person, operating from a particular mind-set. It had an ideology, and Kaplan realized that anyone who understood that ideology would have a tremendous advantage.

Critics of the S.A.T. have long made a kind of parlor game of seeing how many questions on the reading-comprehension section (where a passage is followed by a series of multiple-choice questions about its meaning) can be answered without reading the passage. David Owen, in the anti-S.A.T. account "None of the Above," gives the following example, adapted from an actual S.A.T. exam:

> 1. The main idea of the passage is that:
> A) a constricted view of [this novel] is natural and acceptable
> B) a novel should not depict a vanished society
> C) a good novel is an intellectual rather than an emotional experience
> D) many readers have seen only the comedy [in this novel]
> E) [this novel] should be read with sensitivity and an open mind

If you've never seen an S.A.T. before, it might be difficult to guess the right answer. But if, through practice and exposure, you have managed to assimilate the ideology of the S.A.T.—the kind of decent, middlebrow earnestness that permeates the test—it's possible to develop a kind of gut feeling for the right answer, the confidence to predict, in the pressure and rush of examination time, what the S.A.T. is looking for. A is suspiciously postmodern. B is far too dogmatic. C is something that you would never say to an eager, college-bound student. Is it D? Perhaps, but D seems too small a point. It's probably E—and, sure enough, it is.

With that in mind, try this question:

> 2. The author of [this passage] implies that a work of art is properly judged on the basis of its:
> A) universality of human experience truthfully recorded
> B) popularity and critical acclaim in its own age
> C) openness to varied interpretations, including seemingly contradictory ones
> D) avoidance of political and social issues of minor importance
> E) continued popularity through different eras and with different societies

Is it any surprise that the answer is A? Bob Schaeffer, the public education director of the anti-test group FairTest, says that when he got a copy of the latest version of the S.A.T. the first thing he did was try the reading comprehension section blind. He got twelve out of thirteen questions right.

The math portion of the S.A.T. is perhaps a better example of how coachable the test can be. Here is another question, cited by Owen, from an old S.A.T.:

> In how many different color combinations can 3 balls be painted if each ball is painted one color and there are 3 colors available? (Order is not considered; e.g. red, blue, red is considered the same combination as red, red, blue.)
> A) 4 B) 6 C) 9 D) 10 E) 27

This was, Owen points out, the twenty-fifth question in a twenty-five-question math section. S.A.T.s—like virtually all standardized tests—rank their math questions from easiest to hardest. If the hardest questions came first, the theory goes, weaker students would be so intimidated as they began the test that they might throw up their hands in despair. So this is a "hard" question. The second thing to understand about the S.A.T. is that it only really works if good students get the hard questions right and poor students get the hard questions wrong. If anyone can guess or blunder his way into the right answer to a hard question, then the test isn't doing its job. So this is the second clue: the answer to this question must not be something that an average stu-

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dent might blunder into answering correctly. With these two facts in mind, Owen says, don't focus on the question. Just look at the numbers: there are three balls and three colors. The average student is most likely to guess by doing one of three things—adding three and three, multiplying three times three, or, if he is feeling more adventurous, multiplying three by three by three. So six, nine, and twenty-seven are out. That leaves four and ten. Now, he says, read the problem. It can't be four, since anyone can think of more than four combinations. The correct answer must be D, 10.

Does being able to answer that question mean that a student has a greater "aptitude" for math? Of course not. It just means that he had a clever teacher. Kaplan once determined that the test-makers were fond of geometric problems involving the Pythagorean theorem. So an entire generation of Kaplan students were taught "boo, boo, boo, square root of two," to help them remember how the Pythagorean formula applies to an isosceles right triangle. "It was usually not lack of ability," Kaplan writes, "but poor study habits, inadequate instruction or a combination of the two that jeopardized students' performance." The S.A.T. was not an aptitude test at all.

In proving that the S.A.T. was coachable, Stanley Kaplan did something else, which was of even greater importance. He undermined the use of aptitude tests as a means of social engineering. In the years immediately before and after the First World War, for instance, the country's élite colleges faced what became known as "the Jewish problem." They were being inundated with the children of Eastern European Jewish immigrants. These students came from the lower middle class and they disrupted the genteel Wasp sensibility that had been so much a part of the Ivy League tradition. They were guilty of "underliving and overworking." In the words of one writer, they "worked far into each night [and] their lessons next morning were letter perfect." They were "socially untrained," one Harvard professor wrote, "and their bodily habits are not good." But how could a college keep Jews

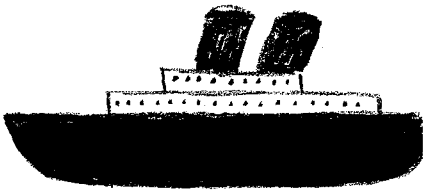
# BRIEFLY NOTED

Somewhere for Me: A Biography of Richard Rodgers, *by Meryle Secrest (Knopf; $30).* Secrest, the author of previous works on Bernstein, Sondheim, and Frank Lloyd Wright, has perfected the tell-all biography, and so we are not shocked to learn that beneath his controlled persona Rodgers was an alcoholic, a philanderer, a cold and distant parent—the composer's elder daughter, Mary Rodgers Guettel, describes their family life with exceptional sourness and zest—and, of course, a highly sensitive artist. Fortunately, Secrest's attention to detail has produced a remarkably balanced portrait. Rodgers's marriage to the beautiful and demanding Dorothy Feiner may have been an unhappy one, but its stability made his career possible; and in his dealings with his deeply troubled lyricist, Lorenz Hart, he displayed as much patience as anyone could possibly expect. Rodgers himself was always the consummate theatre professional, one who believed that he owed his success not to genius but to solid craftsmanship and disciplined hard work: as Secrest takes us through one brilliant Broadway show after another, you never doubt that it was all worthwhile.

Vietnam: Spirits of the Earth, *photographs by Mary Cross, text by Frances FitzGerald (Bulfinch; $50).* In 1973, FitzGerald won the Pulitzer Prize for "Fire in the Lake," her revelatory inquiry into the Vietnam War. Today, a quarter-century after the American withdrawal, she has a gentler story to tell, of a Communist country where people burn paper cell phones as offerings to their ancestors. In counterpoint to the memory of American helicopters lifting away from Saigon, Cross's richly hued photographs detail rural life in the once inaccessible villages of the north. Here tradition and modernity cheerfully collide: snakes curl in a bottle of rice alcohol slowly pickling into wine, while elsewhere a smeary-eyed Asian woman on a giant red billboard coos over her Coca-Cola. This collection returns us to a place of historical reckoning, and, in its careful observations of the land and the people, it documents the daily miracle of continuing.

Poems Seven: New and Complete Poetry, *by Alan Dugan (Seven Stories; $35).* There's an engaging aimlessness to Dugan's poems—their stray attentions, their playful diction, the sense that he is taking language out for a spin. "What is better than leaving a bar / in the middle of the afternoon / besides staying in it or else not / having gone into it in the first place / because you had a decent woman to be with?" But his breezy, loping lines belie a watchful intelligence; the poems' ambiguities feel rooted in the meditations of a reflective individual amid everyday things—one who feels a tug of meaning at the sight of two ketchup bottles set lip to lip in a Second Avenue deli, "acrobatic metaphors of balance." If what binds these poems to the world is a kind of unlovely pragmatism, their magic derives from Dugan's ability to foreground the small, immediate detail, while lifting our eyes to something just beyond it.

Stuffed: Adventures of a Restaurant Family, *by Patricia Volk (Knopf; $23).* This collection of witty, anecdotal family portraits makes you feel that to be young, Jewish, well-off Manhattanites in the nineteen-fifties was very heaven, even though cancer, Nazis, and racial inequality come into the story. The narrator's family are an eclectic bunch: one great-grandfather became the first New World purveyor of pastrami, and his son invented the wrecking ball; Volk's father commuted to his restaurant by motorcycle. But most appealing is their generous view of one another: everyone is called "darling," and everyone is "gorgeous." Perhaps this only exemplifies Volk's epigraph, from William James: "The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook."



out? Columbia University had a policy that the New York State Regents Examinations—the statewide curriculum-based high-school-graduation examination—could be used as the basis for admission, and the plain truth was that Jews did extraordinarily well on the Regents Exams. One solution was simply to put a quota on the number of Jews, which is what Harvard explored. The other idea, which Columbia followed, was to require applicants to take an aptitude test. According to Herbert Hawkes, the dean of Columbia College during this period, because the typical Jewish student was simply a "grind," who excelled on the Regents Exams because he worked so hard, a test of innate intelligence would put him back in his place. "We have not eliminated boys because they were Jews and do not propose to do so," Hawkes wrote in 1918:

> We have honestly attempted to eliminate the lowest grade of applicant and it turns out that a good many of the low grade men are New York City Jews. It is a fact that boys of foreign parentage who have no background in many cases attempt to educate themselves beyond their intelligence. Their accomplishment is over 100% of their ability on account of their tremendous energy and ambition. I do not believe however that a College would do well to admit too many men of low mentality who have ambition but not brains.

Today, Hawkes's anti-Semitism seems absurd, but he was by no means the last person to look to aptitude tests as a means of separating ambition from brains. The great selling point of the S.A.T. has always been that it promises to reveal whether the high-school senior with a 3.0 G.P.A. is someone who could have done much better if he had been properly educated or someone who is already at the limit of his abilities. We want to know that information because, like Hawkes, we prefer naturals to grinds: we think that people who achieve based on vast reserves of innate ability are somehow more promising and more worthy than those who simply work hard.

But is this distinction real? Some years ago, a group headed by the British psychologist John Sloboda conducted a study of musical talent. The group looked at two hundred and fifty-six young musicians, between the ages of ten and sixteen, drawn from élite music academies and public-school music programs alike. They interviewed all the students and their parents and recorded how each student did in England's national music-examination system, which, the researchers felt, gave them a relatively objective measure of musical ability. "What we found was that the best predictor of where you were on that scale was the number of hours practiced," Sloboda says. This is, if you think about it, a little hard to believe. We conceive musical ability to be a "talent"—people have an aptitude for music—and so it would make sense that some number of students could excel at the music exam without practicing very much. Yet Sloboda couldn't find any. The kids who scored the best on the test were, on average, practicing *eight hundred per cent more* than the kids at the bottom. "People have this idea that there are those who learn better than others, can get further on less effort," Sloboda says. "On average, our data refuted that. Whether you're a dropout or at the best school, where you end up can be predicted by how much you practice."

Sloboda found another striking similarity among the "musical" children. They all had parents who were unusually invested in their musical education. It wasn't necessarily the case that the parents were themselves musicians or musically inclined. It was simply that they wanted their children to be that way. "The parents of the high achievers did things that most parents just don't do," he said. "They didn't simply drop their child at the door of the teacher. They went into the practice room. They took notes on what the teacher said, and when they got home they would say, Remember when your teacher said do this and that. There was a huge amount of time and motivational investment by the parents."

Does this mean that there is no such thing as musical talent? Of course not. Most of those hardworking children with pushy parents aren't going to turn out to be Itzhak Perlmans; some will be second violinists in their community orchestra. The point is that when it comes to a relatively well-defined and structured task—like playing an instrument or taking an exam—how hard you work and how supportive your parents are have a lot more to do with success than

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we ordinarily imagine. Ability cannot be separated from effort. The testmakers never understood that, which is why they thought they could weed out the grinds. But educators increasingly do, and that is why college admissions are now in such upheaval. The Texas state-university system, for example, has, since 1997, automatically admitted any student who places in the top ten per cent of his or her high-school class—regardless of S.A.T. score. Critics of the policy said that it would open the door to students from marginal schools whose S.A.T. scores would normally have been too low for admission to the University of Texas—and that is exactly what happened. But so what? The "top ten percenters," as they are known, may have lower S.A.T. scores, but they get excellent grades. In fact, their college G.P.A.s are the equal of students who scored two hundred to three hundred points higher on the S.A.T. In other words, the determination and hard work that propel someone to the top of his high-school class—even in cases where that high school is impoverished—are more important to succeeding in college (and, for that matter, in life) than whatever abstract quality the S.A.T. purports to measure. The importance of the Texas experience cannot be overstated. Here, at last, is an intelligent alternative to affirmative action, a way to find successful minority students without sacrificing academic performance. But we would never have got this far without Stanley Kaplan—without someone first coming along and puncturing the mystique of the S.A.T. "Acquiring test-taking skills is the same as learning to play the piano or ride a bicycle," Kaplan writes. "It requires practice, practice, practice. Repetition breeds familiarity. Familiarity breeds confidence." In this, as in so many things, the grind *was* the natural.

To read Kaplan's memoir is to be struck by what a representative figure he was in the postwar sociological miracle that was Jewish Brooklyn. This is the lower-middle-class, second- and third-generation immigrant world, stretching from Prospect Park to Sheepshead Bay, that ended up peopling the upper reaches of American professional life. Thousands of students from those neighborhoods made their way through Kaplan's classroom in the fifties and sixties, many along what Kaplan calls the "heavily traveled path" from Brooklyn to Cornell, Yale, and the University of Michigan. Kaplan writes of one student who increased his score by three hundred and forty points, and ended up with a Ph.D. and a position as a scientist at Xerox. "Debbie" improved her S.A.T. by five hundred points, got into the University of Chicago, and earned a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. Arthur Levine, the president of Teachers College at Columbia University, raised his S.A.T.s by two hundred and eighty-two points, "making it possible," he writes on the book's jacket, "for me to attend a better university than I ever would have imagined." Charles Schumer, the senior senator from New York, studied while he worked the mimeograph machine in Kaplan's office, and ended up with close to a perfect sixteen hundred.

These students faced a system designed to thwart the hard worker, and what did they do? They got together with their pushy parents and outworked it. Kaplan says that he knew a "strapping athlete who became physically ill before taking the S.A.T. because his mother was so demanding." There was the mother who called him to say, "Mr. Kaplan, I think I'm going to commit suicide. My son made only a 1000 on the S.A.T." "One mother wanted her straight-A son to have an extra edge, so she brought him to my basement for years for private tutoring in basic subjects," Kaplan recalls. "He was extremely bright and today is one of the country's most successful ophthalmologists." Another student was "so nervous that his mother accompanied him to class armed with a supply of terry-cloth towels. She stood outside the classroom and when he emerged from our class sessions dripping in sweat, she wiped him dry and then nudged him back into the classroom." Then, of course, there was the formidable four-foot-eight figure of Ericka Kaplan, granddaughter of the chief rabbi of the synagogue of Prague. "My mother was a perfectionist whether she was keeping the company books or setting the dinner table," Kaplan writes, still in her thrall today. "She was my best cheerleader, the reason I performed so well, and I constantly strove to please her." What chance did even the most artfully constructed S.A.T. have against the mothers of Brooklyn?

Stanley Kaplan graduated No. 2 in his class at City College, and won the school's Award for Excellence in Natural Sciences. He wanted to be a doctor, and he applied to five medical schools, confident that he would be accepted. To his shock, he was rejected by every single one. Medical schools did not take public colleges like City College seriously. More important, in the forties there was a limit to how many Jews they were willing to accept. "The term 'meritocracy'—or success based on merit rather than heritage, wealth, or social status—wasn't even coined yet," Kaplan writes, "and the methods of selecting students based on talent, not privilege, were still evolving."

That's why Stanley Kaplan was always pained by those who thought that what went on in his basement was somehow subversive. He loved the S.A.T. He thought that the test gave people like him the best chance of overcoming discrimination. As he saw it, he was simply giving the middle-class students of Brooklyn the same shot at a bright future that their counterparts in the private schools of Manhattan had. In 1983, after years of hostility, the College Board invited him to speak at its annual convention. It was one of the highlights of Kaplan's life. "Never, in my wildest dreams," he began, "did I ever think I'd be speaking to you here today."

The truth is, however, that Stanley Kaplan was wrong. What he did in his basement *was* subversive. The S.A.T. was designed as an abstract intellectual tool. It never occurred to its makers that aptitude was a social matter: that what people were capable of was affected by what they knew, and what they knew was affected by what they were taught, and what they were taught was affected by the industry of their teachers and parents. And if what the S.A.T. was measuring, in no small part, was the industry of teachers and parents, then what did it mean? Stanley Kaplan may have loved the S.A.T. But when he stood up and recited "boo, boo, boo, square root of two," he killed it. ♦

### IN FASHION

# ALTERED STATES

*A new show at the Costume Institute features outré outfits.*

### BY JUDITH THURMAN

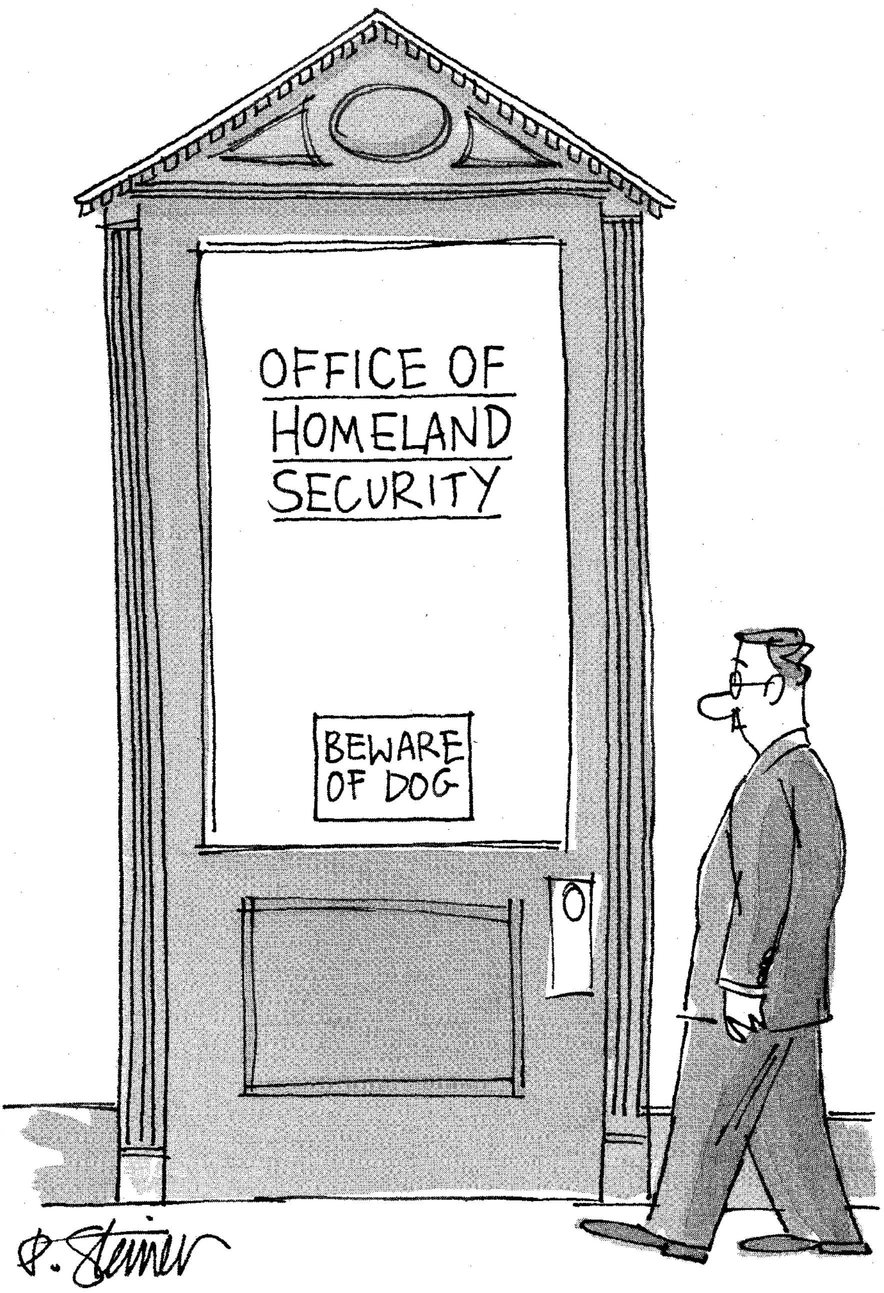
Fish were once so plentiful in the Thames that they became a diet staple of the poor. According to London folklore, there was a clause in the employment contracts of apprentices stipulating that they couldn't be forced to eat salmon more than a few times a week. Beauty is the diet staple of those who design and promote high fashion, and they, too, sometimes object to the sameness of their fare. So they rebel, usually unspectacularly, by hiring a model with a tiny gap between her front teeth, a broad mouth, freckles, an infinitesimally crooked nose, or some other marginal irregularity that would pass undetected in the civilian population. Then they congratulate themselves on their temerity. But a few express their grievances in a more artistically subversive way. "Beauty has a cardinal importance, for ugliness cannot be spoiled, and to despoil is the essence of eroticism," Georges Bataille asserted. It is at times the essence of fashion.

*Thierry Mugler's evening ensemble, in black tooled leather and feathers, 1997.*

Moderately sophisticated people no longer judge art according to the criterion of beauty, and it's hard to shock them, short of spattering dung on a picture of the Virgin Mary. Not so in fashion, where much lip service but little money is paid to radical originality. The bread-and-butter work of nearly all first-rank designers, even those who consider themselves avant-garde, is a form of society portraiture. They are in the business of marketing the tailored equivalent of a painting that one can hang over a sofa. Purists such as Martin Margiela, the J. D. Salinger of couture, who refuses to be photographed; Jil Sander, purer since she sold her name to Prada and became unemployed; Rei Kawakubo, of Comme des Garçons, who, in 1997, showed a collection of padded dresses with unsightly lumps like those of old ladies or the dreadfully ill; and Walter van Beirendonck, the edgy Belgian who likes the slogan "Mutilate," still have to sell enough relatively prosaic garments—trousers with legs, for example—to finance their poetry. But the close of the century was a period of heightened revolt that saw the younger big names in fashion, with increasing insolence, questioning the canons of beauty (the employment contracts) of their profession, and investing their virtuosity in what the fashion critics, whose diet staple is designer self-promotion, and who get sick of that, too, have sometimes disparaged as "runway stunts." The stunts tended, and were intended, to be trashy, amusing, cruel, ugly, obscene, macabre, inspired, "transgressive," or all of the above simultaneously.

Many of the pieces could be considered "clothing" only nominally, since they were cut from nearly anything but cloth. John Galliano used a broken collapsible umbrella as the cowl for a raincoat. Thierry Mugler dressed one of his dominatrixes in a suit of chrome armor with peekaboo plastic cutouts. Issey Miyake's samurai *kamishimo* (photographed for the cover of *Artforum*) was constructed of lacquered bamboo. Hussein Chalayan, who sometimes treats clothing as furniture, showed a polished wooden body brace fastened, so it seemed, with coffin hinges. Alexander McQueen, the most pugnacious and talented of the stuntmen, fashioned a bustier with a floral excrescence out of sterling silver and a bolero from sandalwood fans. He also designed a pair of shapely wooden prosthetics for a Paralympic athlete named Aimee Mullins who sometimes models for him, and who is a bilateral amputee. The prosthetics represent the feet in high-heeled shoes; the calves are ornately carved with a Dionysiac relief of vines, grapes, and leaves that seem to suggest the possibility of magical regeneration. They are part of an ensemble that includes two other pieces. One is a brown leather corset molded like a medieval cuirass and scarred by thick, diagonal Frankenstein sutures. The other is a short, bias-cut skirt of tiered and frothy Valenciennes lace. McQueen was accused of "exploiting" Mullins for publicity, and perhaps he was, but he repaid her. She's the muse of a haunting reverie: the tribute of a warped artist to the heroism of a damaged maiden.

These experiments and others in a similar vein form the core of an ambitious show at the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art that examines fashion's eternal and probably terminal ambivalence to nature. It is called—with understatement, I think—



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“Extreme Beauty,” and there is so much opulence of texture and imagination, so much bravura and craftsmanship seething in a small space that it’s hard to digest. One can’t blame the admirable curator, Harold Koda, for one’s claustrophobia. It’s the fault of the trustees. Every time I visit the institute, I’m indignant that armor should enjoy a palatial gallery on the main floor, while couture is relegated to an orphan’s closet under the stairs.

To reach the basement where clothes are displayed, one meanders through the Egyptian wing, past the reconstructed crypt, the kids giggling at mummies, the statues of very rich and thin royal couples nude under their gossamer loincloths, and of mutant deities who are the harbingers of what lies below. “Extreme Beauty” is laid out like a gorgeous corpse on an embalming table. Each of five sections is devoted to the fetishizing of a specific erogenous zone: Neck and Shoulders, Chest, Waist, Hips, and Feet. The organizing principle, never strictly enforced (Buttocks and Crotch have crept in with Hips), is theme and variation rather than chronology. The heterogeneity of the clothes is as extreme as their distinction. Antique and tribal garments mingle with contemporary couture, vulgarity consorts with grandeur, anarchists with prudes, envy of purity coexists with contempt and reverence for it. The clothes embody such disparate notions of femininity and conflicting impulses to exaggerate, suppress, inflate, conceal, deform, exalt, or transfigure the body part in question that you begin to suspect that the warp of fashion is an occult memory of our past incarnations, and its woof a still hazy intuition of our future ones. There doesn’t seem to be much evolutionary logic to the process until one imagines each new fad, innovation, or shift in erotic focus as the rumor of a Darwinian advantage that swiftly makes the rounds of a credulous population. A cure for mortality and ugliness has at last been found! And it’s a farthingale. A hobble skirt. Bell-bottoms. A penis gourd. Four-inch stilettos.

The fashionable body as it’s represented in “Extreme Beauty” has talons like a bird of prey, pterodactyl wings, mammalian fur, a beetle’s finely articulated carapace, a gorilla’s shoulders, a pigeon’s breast, a camel’s humps, stork legs, amphibian scales, and a space alien’s mutability. A display of bustle forms from the eighteen-eighties made of cane, wire, and batting looks curiously like a production line of unfinished tails, and a protuberantly bustled dress of the same period imparts to its mannequin the faintly comic dignity of a waterfowl. McQueen’s black lace-and-feather evening gown is a triumph of bespoke taxidermy whose phallic boa morphs from a snake’s body into a swan’s beaked head. Freud would have liked it, and it reminded me that he collected Egyptian talismans of sex and death and kept them in his consulting room for inspiration. The objects here are talismans of our species’ strangeness, too, and if the installation resembles a Salon des Refusés for all the outfits the Academy rejected as too far out, it also resembles the curiosity cabinet of a refined and perverse fin-de-siècle aesthete—a collector incurably infatuated with artifice who could have said, as Christian Dior did in a cryptic confession posted near the entrance to the show: “My dream is to save women from nature.”

Geneticists may be close to patenting a hybrid body, but fashion has been working on the project for millennia, and its experiments with the human form have always been carried out on living subjects, not all of them volunteers. Much of the Waist section is a mausoleum of corsets. Some are purely decorative, like the beaded girdles of Dinka warriors and their couture copies by Galliano. Others are hardworking, like the nineteenth-century Sadean fantasy wrought in trellised steel. Miyake’s bustier, fashioned out of wire, looks just like a slinky. A dainty “body” in chartreuse silk comes from the personal wardrobe of Mr. Pearl, a corsetiere who works with Christian Lacroix and who is himself what used to be known as a “tight-lacer.” The smallest corset has the circumference of a man’s neck. Few garments have been so politically controversial—the delight of rakes, cartoonists, and pornographers; the bane of dress reformers, Victorian gynecologists, and feminists—or so semiotically versatile. The corset was a neat package of sexual allure and moral rectitude tied up with pink ribbons. Women were “liberated” from its “tyranny” more than once, only

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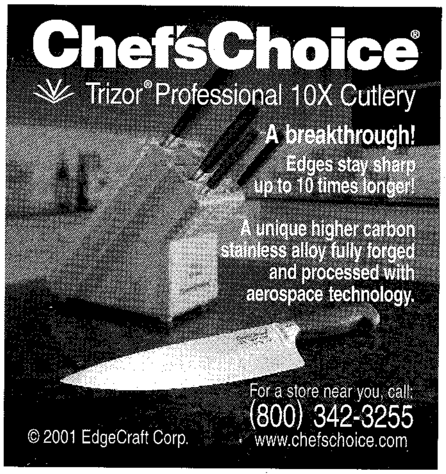

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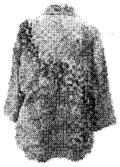

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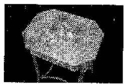

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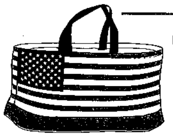

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to relapse, and the Empire shift in the Chest section, a figure-revealing wisp of sheer muslin as unforgiving as it is exquisite, suggests why.

The most diabolical experiment in fashion history was also the longest lived. Chinese foot binding lasted for nearly a millennium, and it wasn't restricted to the leisure classes: many peasants subjected their daughters to the practice. There is a pair of well-worn leather work boots in the show—the size of a toddler's booties—equipped with metal cleats for an icy winter of hard labor. The intervention was performed in early childhood, when the four small toes were broken, folded under, and bandaged tightly to the heel. The dressings had to be changed frequently, and pus drained from the gangrenous wounds that often resulted. A woman with bound feet was disabled, though not utterly. Her shoes were elevated and angled to relieve pressure on the mutilated sole, so that she could eventually take small, relatively painless steps supported by a cane or a retainer. By the time she was old enough to marry, her ornamental stump had acquired the shape of a tiny, atrophied lingam, or, as the Chinese preferred to describe it, a golden lotus. There is a pair of fuchsia silk bridal slippers in the show. They measure three inches.

In a work entitled "A Short History of Decay," the Romanian philosopher E. M. Cioran defines frivolity as "the most effective antidote to the disease of being what one is"—a useful insight for the student of fashion. Who, since the Fall, has ever been perfectly content with her body? Critics of sartorial misogyny and feminine vanity sometimes make too much of the mortifications women endure without first asking women why they submit to them and what they feel like. I, for example, am old enough to have worn, at a nubile age, a long-line panty girdle, which, for those who have never seen one, is a piece of "figure control" lingerie cut like a pair of biker's shorts, but of an inflexible Lycra, with a nasty, reptilian snap. A panty girdle replaced the garter belt and immobilized—indeed, anesthetized—one's lower torso (just as the hair spray of the same era flash-froze one's beehive), so that nothing could stir or be stirred. By the end of a schoolday, the pressure of the elastic had embedded the garters into the flesh of the thigh, leaving an imprint like that of a small crustacean fossilized by a mud slide. Yet the stricture was strangely comforting—perhaps as swaddling is to a restless infant. I've always felt that some of the most appealing garments are those in which a woman can seclude herself.

Comfort in Western dress, as Valerie Steele observes in "The Corset: A Cultural History" (Yale; $39.95), is a relatively modern and liberal concept, dating from the early nineteenth century. High style derives from aristocratic, which is to say military, ideals of pride, stoicism, hardness, swagger, and snobbery—of trial by ordeal and tournament chic. Koda explains in his notes to the catalogue of the show ("Extreme Beauty: The Body Transformed"; Yale; $40) that the exhibition originated in a discussion of fashion's "competitive nature" and obsessive "one-upmanship." A scholar of couture with a courtly, esoteric bent and an academic prose style, he himself has chosen to snub popular culture almost entirely. There are none of the comic books and animations that have been, and continue to be, influential sources of extreme fashion; no costumes from science-fiction films or situation comedies (the inspired "I Love Lucy" Paris-dress episode springs to mind); no trace of punk, rap, Goth, disco, or death metal; no sporting or (explicit) sex gear; no drag-queen finery. There is, however, a vitrine of wishfully proportioned armorial codpieces in finely etched tempered steel that relates the posturings of Iron Man to the blond ambitions of Material Girl in her ruched-velvet rocket bras by Gaultier.

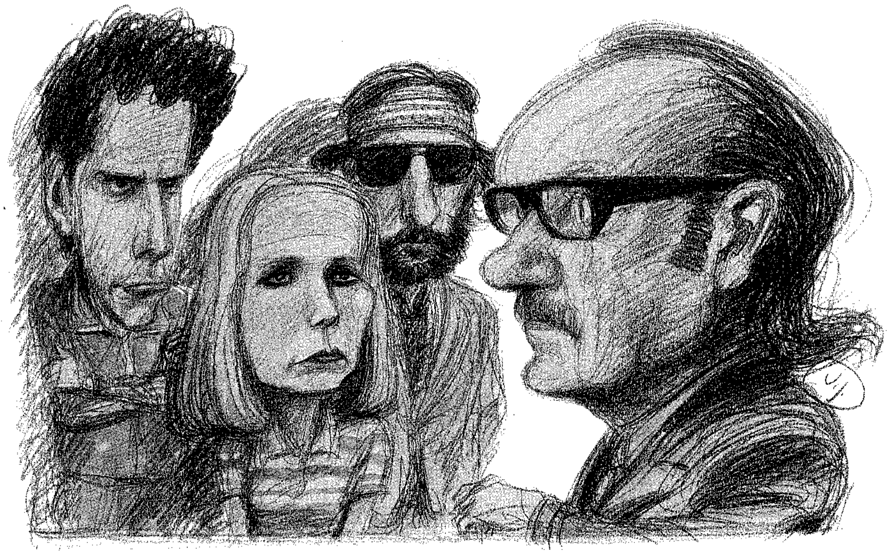
The extremes of fashion aspire to be as malevolent as nature's, or as benign. The piece that Koda chose for the cover of the catalogue is an ethereally beautiful, Brobdingnagian ruff of tarnished polyester organza by Junya Watanabe, six feet wide, that reminds the curator, he said to me, of "a used air-conditioner filter." It alludes, more obviously, to the ruffs and collars of Shakespeare's time, lacy platters for great heads soon to be severed—a fashion that transcended sex, as Shakespeare did. In the only image we have of him, he's wearing one. But it also conjures a giant milkweed flower to wish on and blow away. ◆

### THE CURRENT CINEMA

# BLOODY RELATIONS

*"The Royal Tenenbaums" and "The Business of Strangers."*

BY ANTHONY LANE



*The Tenenbaums: Ben Stiller, Gwyneth Paltrow, Luke Wilson, and Gene Hackman.*

All happy families are functional; every dysfunctional family is dysfunctional in its own way, although it may think of itself as perfectly functional, and it may even end up happier, in its own way, than one of the happy ones. How lucky it is that Tolstoy did not live to see "The Royal Tenenbaums," a movie designed to revise all theories of domestic harmony. If Anna Karenina had been born a Tenenbaum, she would never have jumped in front of the train. She would have lit a cigarette and put on the Rolling Stones.

The setting is elusive. The time is the late seventies or early eighties, but I wouldn't swear to it. The place is New York, only it isn't. The director, Wes Anderson, shot most of the film in this city, yet the New York that he came up with stands at one remove from the real thing—a step-city, or a city-in-law, somewhere more crumbling and crenellated than what we are used to, and where the cabs are dying of rust. And here is a house as tall as a story: was it really built, you ask yourself, or was it drawn by an eager child, then painted and peopled accordingly? It has salmon-pink walls up the staircase, a danceless ballroom, and a tent of welcoming yellow pitched in the living room. This is the domain of the Tenenbaums, the daylight answer to the Addamses: the patriarch, Royal Tenenbaum (Gene Hackman), his estranged wife, Etheline (Anjelica Huston), and their sons, Chas (Ben Stiller), a widowed tycoon in a fuzzy red tracksuit, and Richie (Luke Wilson)—hairy, headbanded, and dumb with discontent. He was a tennis star of international clout, until one day he froze and folded on the court; the cause remains cloudy, although it may involve his sister, Margot (Gwyneth Paltrow), with whom, being a good Tenenbaum, he happens to be in love. This isn't strictly incest, because Margot was adopted. Nevertheless, as her father points out, "it's still frowned upon—but what isn't, these days?"

I love that line; it's at once breezy and nostalgic, with a certain screw-you insouciance around the edges, and Hackman tosses it off with his growling bonhomie, relishing his status as the elder statesman who doubles as a Young Turk. Anderson plays a handy game of age-swapping in this film. Wisdom and skill are the property of the children, whereas Royal races over the threshold of seniority with the

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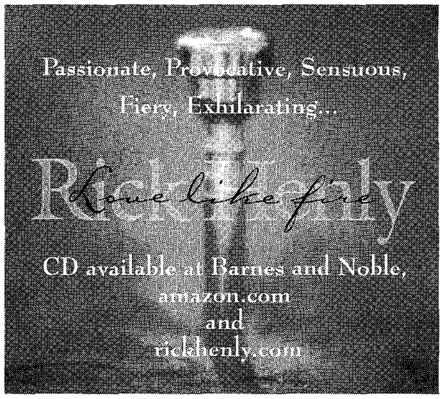

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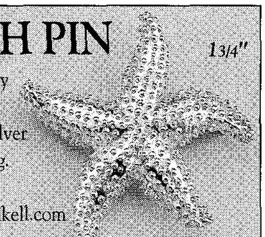

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grinning glee of a kid. (He disapproves of the risk-free, no-fun atmosphere that is breathed by Chas's young sons, and when he spirits them out for a spree—swimming, go-carting, hitching a ride on the side of a garbage truck—it is hard to decide who enjoys it more.) By far the worst epoch, we are led to understand, is the prime of life, the traditional hotbed of achievement. Take an advertising executive to this movie and he will choke on his Coke. All the Tenenbaum offspring were prodigies: Margot was a playwright, Richie was a racquet on legs, and Chas, as we are informed in the voice-over, "started buying real estate in his early teens." But there's the joke. Hollywood loves a genius, but these folk are ex-geniuses, has-beens and has-dones, and their best days have faded by the time the movie begins. Gwyneth Paltrow gives Margot the faraway haze of a spent force; with her eyes so rich in mascara that she must have been taking tips from a panda, and with the sad, swish perfection of her Fendi mink, she seems smaller and more defenseless than her earlier self, whom we glimpse in a flurry of flashbacks. Paltrow, like others in the cast, bites hard into this role, as if starved by most of the work she's been getting lately. The only performer who seems truly relaxed is Owen Wilson, whose Bob Hope schnozzle and wide, if secretive, smile have become reliable tools to cheer an audience up. Not only does he play Eli Cash, the boyhood pal of Richie and the adult swain of Margot; he also co-wrote the movie with Anderson, *and* he gets to wear a cowboy hat. No wonder the guy looks pleased.

Does "The Royal Tenenbaums" hang together and complete its mission? For all the funny glamour of its retro styling, is it more than a freakorama? To begin with, I wasn't sure; it was hard to establish what advance it marked on the majestic deadpan of "Rushmore," Anderson's previous venture. (Bill Murray plays in both movies, but his new role, as Margot's obliging husband, is far more subdued.) Slowly, however, the communal oddity of the new picture began to hit home. For some reason, I caught it first in the soundtrack, notably in the sharp sprinkling of Ravel that Anderson throws over his chosen people—a pizzicato passage from the String Quartet which tightens our sense of the Tenenbaums as unpredictable toys, either running down or whizzing out of control. Why else would Royal fake a fatal illness, if not to move back into the palatial home? It is as though he were contriving to smuggle a little love—that most contraband of goods—into the household from which it has apparently been banished. Even when his impatient relations tip him out again, he declares that the last six days have been among the finest of his life. A voice-over adds, "Immediately after making this statement, Royal realized that it was true."

If you can explain the strange effect of that line, you're doing better than I am. The whole tone of the film is like Paltrow's eyes: a steady gleam, rimmed in darkness, and only a blink away from mad. Look out for the fabulous shot near the end, after Eli has crashed his sports car into the side of the house: the camera travels along the scarlet flank of a fire truck, leaping smoothly from one family member to the next and eavesdropping on their respective conversations—Royal befriending a dalmatian crossbreed, for instance, or the staid Henry Sherman (Danny Glover), Etheline's gentleman suitor, explaining the legal and tax implications of the crash. Each character, as ever, is tucked into a shell of his or her obsessions, and yet the filming itself—the grace of Anderson's draftsmanship, as it were—binds the figures together into a team. The movie has no climax, no thundercrack of redemption, and the death that rounds it off is no more grievous, or unexpected, than the rain that drops politely on the casket. The best way to approach "The Royal Tenenbaums," perhaps, would be to visit your bookshelf and open your Edward Gorey; spend an evening with some of his writings and drawings, rub against the velvet of his lugubrious wit, and you will be ready for Royal and the clan.

How do you cast Stockard Channing? She's such a spunky presence that the camera doesn't always know where to look, as though fearing the ferocity of her glance. Those rounded features still bear a vestige of the upbeat girlishness that won her the part of Betty Rizzo in "Grease," and yet so readily do they bunch and pucker with worry that Channing seems too grown up, too wise to the layout of life's trapdoors, to be at ease in modern movies. If I could, I would spirit her back to the days of Irene Dunne and Mary Astor—chipper, neat-faced dames whose powers of reaction, like Channing's, were comedy-quick, even when there was nothing to laugh about.

In "The Business of Strangers," Channing plays Julie Styron, the vice-president of an investment company. That, at any rate, is her position at the start; by the end, she has been not just professionally enhanced but emotionally wiped out. Dry, deliberate, and divorced from a husband who wanted children, of all things, Julie measures out her life in hotel rooms. The young writer-director, Patrick Stettner, knows how to dramatize an idea on a lo-cal budget; not for him the roar and bray of planes taking off but a simple abstraction of the grass *beneath* a jet, combed in the downdraft like green corn. On the other hand, I sensed the familiar arm twist that accompanies almost every film about business; if corporate existence were honestly as hellish and numbing as most artists—not just movie directors—would like it to be, then nobody of any calibre would go into it in the first place. We are told in no uncertain terms how Julie feels about her work, but we never really learn what she does.

When a young tech assistant, Paula Murphy (Julia Stiles), fails to arrive for a presentation, Julie fires her. But planes get cancelled, and the two women are stranded in an airport hotel, with nothing in common but an empty evening and a full flow of Scotch. "That's a manly drink," says Paula, who, far from being pissed at losing her job, feels free to rib Julie for being stuffy, middle-aged, and cramped. Things turn nasty when Nick Harris (Frederick Weller), a feral headhunter (he prefers "placement provider"), winds up in Julie's room. Paula reveals that he once raped a friend of hers, and, egged on by Julie, she exacts revenge. Looking back at the film, I don't buy all this, but no matter; Channing is so stormy, so keen to unleash her resentments, that for an hour or so you do believe in Julie—in all the wild words that she scrawls on the body of the half-naked Nick, and the foxy right hook that she throws at Paula in return for a simple slap. If Patrick Stettner wants to be the Strindberg of the spreadsheet, he's going about it the right way; think of the original Miss Julie, taking fright in the clutches of her inferior. Just like the new one. ♦

## DANCING

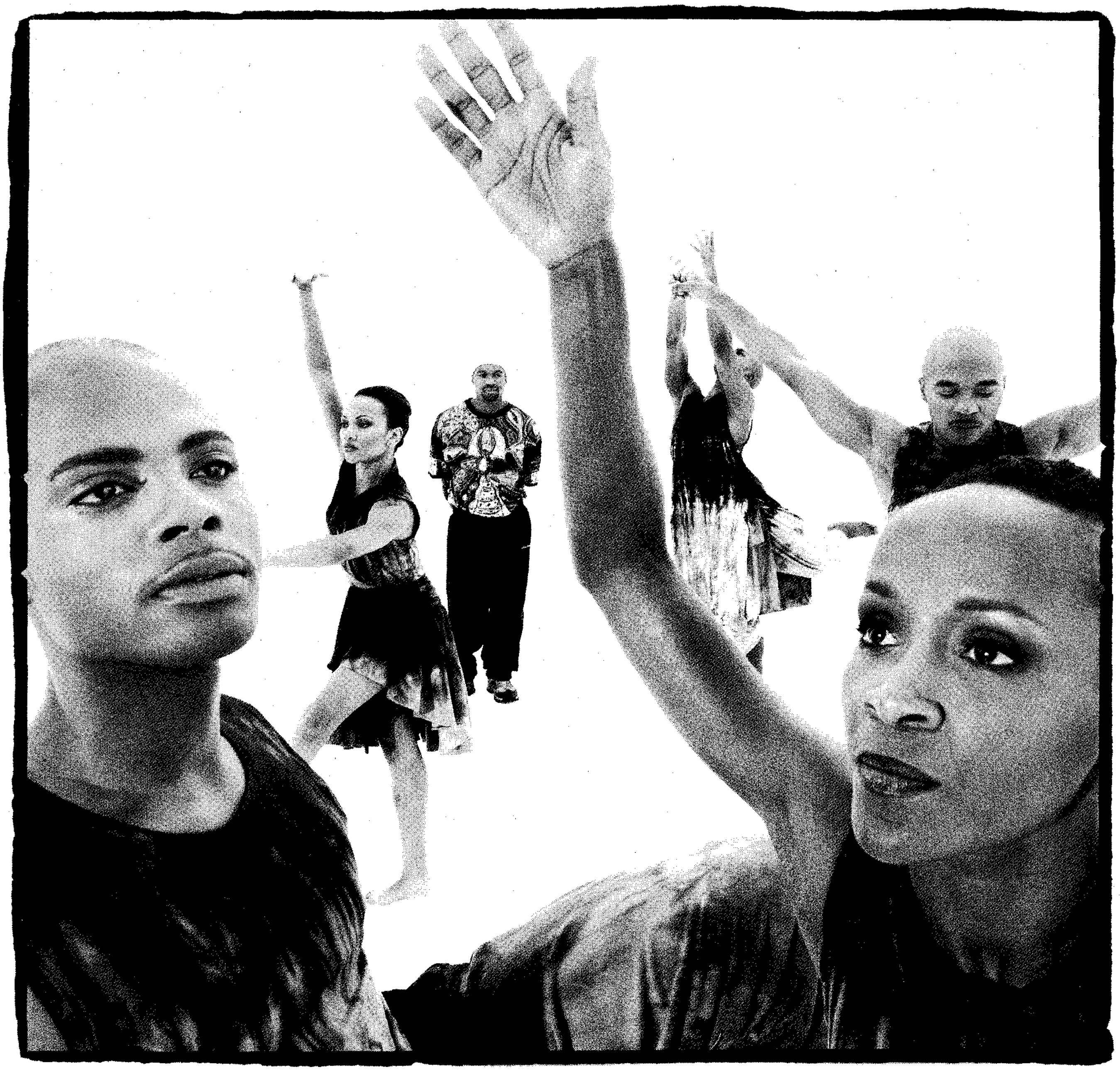
# THE SPIRIT MOVES

*Has the Alvin Ailey company found the choreographer it needs?*

### BY JOAN ACOCELLA

No troupe in this country is dancing better than the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. Almost all the dancers have high extensions, flagpole balances, true hearts, sensitive ears. Yet they are all different: Matthew Rushing, with his oiled mastery; Bahiyah Sayyed-Gaines, a furnace of concentration; Amos J. Machanic, Jr., the one you want a date with; Glenn A. Sims, so natural, like a friend. And those are just the featured performers. People come onstage whom you have never seen before, and you say, "Who is *that*?" In one of this season's pieces, I missed what the stars were doing because I was too busy watching Abdur-Rahim Jackson, who joined the company a few months ago.

This has always been the case: the Ailey dancers have always been fabulous. And in my experience they have never had a repertory worthy of them. Alvin Ailey, who founded the troupe in 1958, is honored today as a great American choreographer, but the truth is that he created one great piece, the 1960 "Revelations" (and it is very great, on a par with the best of Balanchine and Graham), and never again made anything half as interesting. He brought in other choreographers, but they tended to make for him what he



*Ronald Brown, at rear, with dancers from "Serving Nia," which will be performed through December. Photograph by Chris Callis.*

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made: high-powered, emotionalized jazz dances that, with considerable regularity, were about either ain't-we-got-fun or ain't-we-got-soul, the latter especially. Spirituality is central to modern dance, and to African-American culture. Therefore no theme is more important in African-American modern dance. But no theme is more subject, also, to easy exultations, Hallmark pieties, and that truth was evident almost every season on the Ailey stage. Many's the occasion on which I have thought, watching the troupe, that if the dancers went down to the river to worship the river god one more time I would go out and hang myself.

When Ailey died, in 1989, and his former star Judith Jamison took over, the repertory did not get better. It got worse—cornier, churchier. The dancers were able to pull this stuff off, and you loved them for it, but now and then, when you saw them in something really good, you thought, Why can't it always be this way? Matthew Rushing may be the best dancer in New York, but recently he has seemed to me a little too relaxed, a little smirky, even, as if he could do this in his sleep, which he probably could. That no one has made a really ambitious new role for him—a role that would pull out of him everything he has and everything he doesn't know he has—is a crime. Likewise Dwana Adiaha Smallwood, a dancer of jaw-dropping ability. Why is she being used, again and again, as the house comic? She deserves more, better.

The situation may be about to improve. Two years ago, Jamison commissioned a piece from Ronald K. Brown, a young independent choreographer. Brown is as spiritual as even this company could want. He grew up in Bedford-Stuyvesant, in the bosom of black devotionalism. A great-uncle of his founded the Trinity Zion Pentecostal Church of Christ in Brooklyn, and that was where Brown worshipped as a child. Without prompting, he tells interviewers that most of his work is about "people trying to get to the temple of God."

If Brown has taken his inspiration from his black-dance elders, the crucial person, I believe, is not Ailey but Garth Fagan. Fagan was the first really important black choreographer to claim that black dancers could be inheritors of American modern-dance styles whatever their color. He was an admirer of Merce Cunningham, and that shows in his work. Brown, as befits his age (thirty-five), has taken a closer look at postmodern dance—the Judson Dance Theatre choreographers and their legatees—and the postmoderns' offhand manner informs his choreography. At the same time—and this is true of Fagan, too—no one is more "black." Ailey's work was not African but African-American, vintage nineteen-sixties: a high-kilowatt, hard-sell jazz dance that looked a lot like what other people were doing, in fish-net stockings, on Broadway. By contrast, Brown uses actual African material, dances from Senegal, Guinea, and the Ivory Coast (where he has worked), with the knees bent, the buttocks out, the feet flat on the floor, and with the whiplash logic—where, in a turn, the torso is already around before the pelvis gets the message—that is only African. This tradition, the slave trade's unlooked-for gift to American art, is what made our national dance a serious, radical thing, different from the more decorous and literary European ballet.

Brown's first piece for the Ailey troupe, the 1999 "Grace," is about what he said: people trying to get to God. And it is by doing African dance, to African and African-American music—Fela Kuti, Duke Ellington—that they get there. In entrée after entrée, the dancers cross the space with their faces raised to a beckoning light in the stage-right wings. In between, they do all the wonderful African things that I described, plus those African jumps—God, those jumps!—with their legs making a whole, complicated journey before they land. But the dancers don't sell any of this; they just do it. When there is a change in the music (the score is a composite of six pieces), they don't hide the seams. They stop, and wait for the next piece to start. Occasionally, they even stop in the middle of a musical selection and stand there, catching their breath, before they take off again. This is what I mean by Brown's post-

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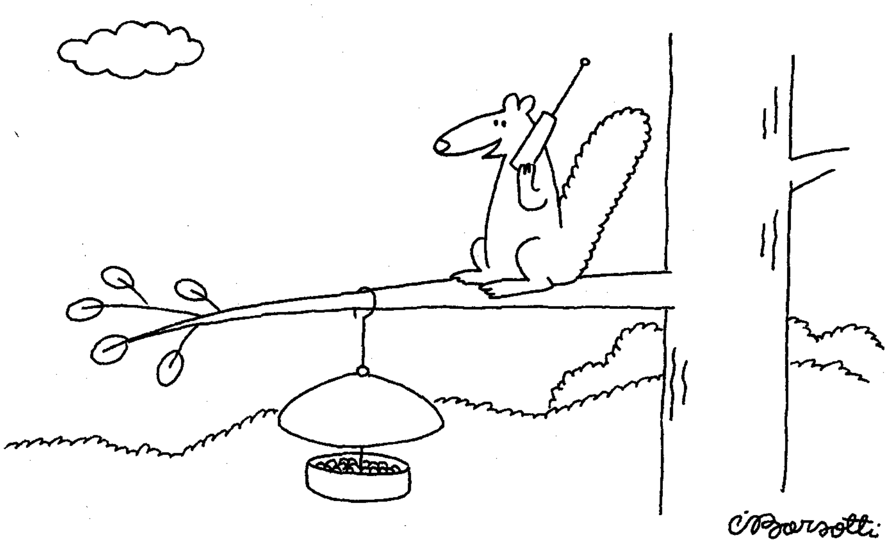

*"It's rustic and undiscovered, but you'd better hurry."*

* * *

modernism, though it is also African.

"Serving Nia," Brown's new dance for the company, is different—smaller, shorter, cooler. In "Grace," the people were going to God. In "Serving Nia," they have found God, but, as Brown has again obligingly explained, they have to learn that life is duty. (*Nia* means "purpose" in Swahili.) Some of the piece is actually funny. Where "Grace" used Ellington's "Come Sunday," which is a flat-out Negro prayer, "Serving Nia" uses Dizzy Gillespie's "Swing Low, Sweet Cadillac," a comic take on the revered Negro spiritual. And, while "Grace" has some pat symbolism, the new piece is less literal. Brown has said that there are real, personified Nias in the dance—a young Nia, a sister Nia, and an overseer Nia—but I couldn't find them. What I found, as in "Grace," was thrilling dance, of the African variety, this time with a note of labor as well as enjoyment. I also saw something I hadn't seen in "Grace": an expert feel for stage space, with different units—one person here, two there, six somewhere else—doing different dances, charging the air with intersecting energies. Even within units, the dancers are often not quite in unison. Also, they work *through* the phrases—they are loose, they swing—rather than banging down on the peaks. This, together with a heightened pomo matter-of-factness—the dancers sometimes walk onstage as if they were walking down the street—gives the dance a lovely subtlety. Seeking God, in Brown's view, may be the most important thing in the world, but it's also just a regular, daily business.

Brown has his weaknesses, notably an avoidance of organic form. The beads-on-a-string, entrée-after-entrée structure of "Grace" and "Serving Nia" works nicely, and fits the musical structure (medley), but it's too easy. I think Brown should start using one piece of music and making one, articulated piece of choreography to go with it. Also, sophisticated as he is, he is not immune to sentimentality or portentousness. He should take a vow not to use sidelights or dry ice for the next two or three years. Finally, I wish the dancers hadn't started hugging each other at the end of "Grace." And I wish the priestess who leads them to the temple hadn't looked so much like Ailey's suffering-mother figures (see "Cry," for example). I'm tired of those wise old gals.

Still, what a thrill it was to watch this priestess come out at the beginning of "Grace" and do a frenzied African dance *against* the music—two or three times as fast. Elsewhere with the Ailey repertory, you're used to saying, "I know what this is." Here you don't know. The dance is both ancient and modern, holy and witty. So you sit up in your chair. However secular we have become, religion is still at the bottom of most of the best art in the world. But that emotion, in order to convince, must be deep and elastic, easy and natural—absorbent, like a living thing. Ronald Brown knows that. Or I don't know if he knows it; he just has it, is it. ♦

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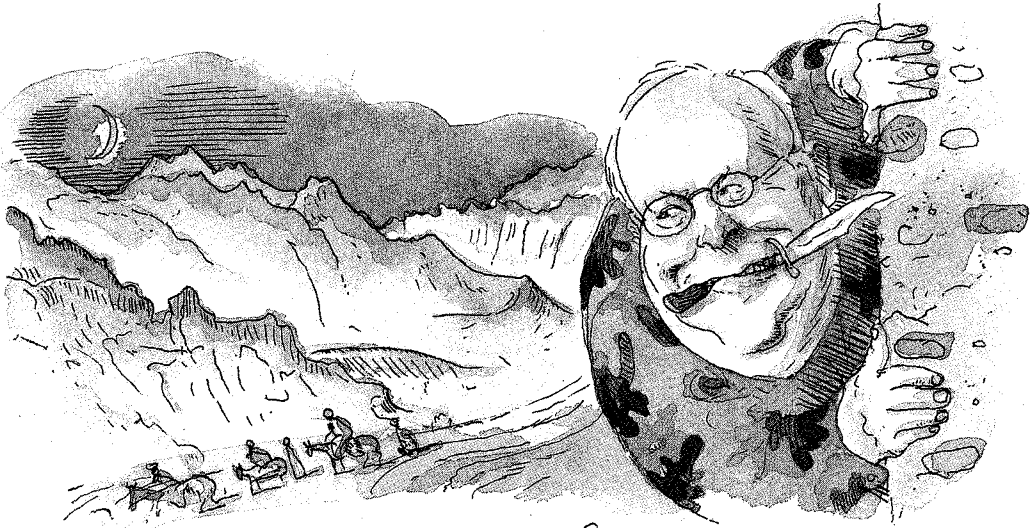
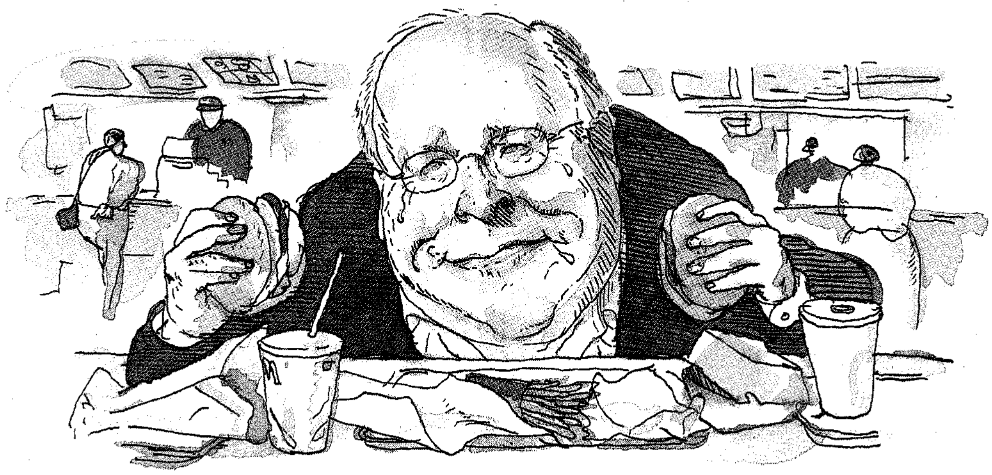
THE BACK PAGE BY BARRY BLITT

# Where's Cheney Really?

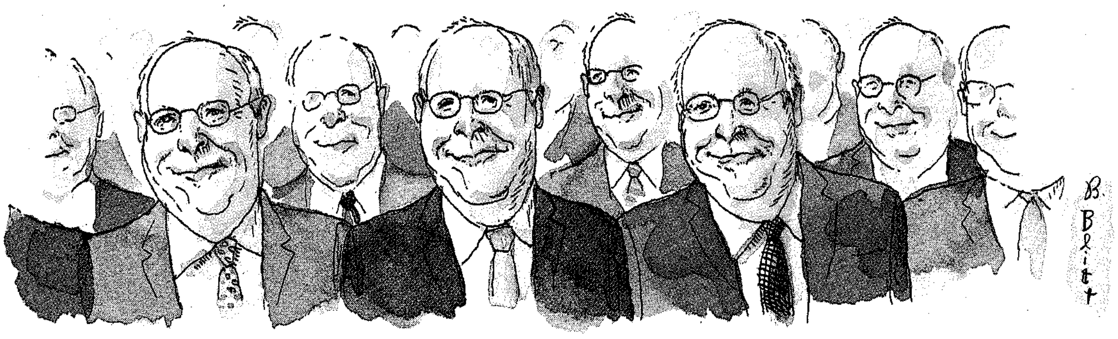
some educated guesses...



He's been hunting down Osama himself.



He's on an extended high-cholesterol bender.



He's involved in a top-secret cloning experiment
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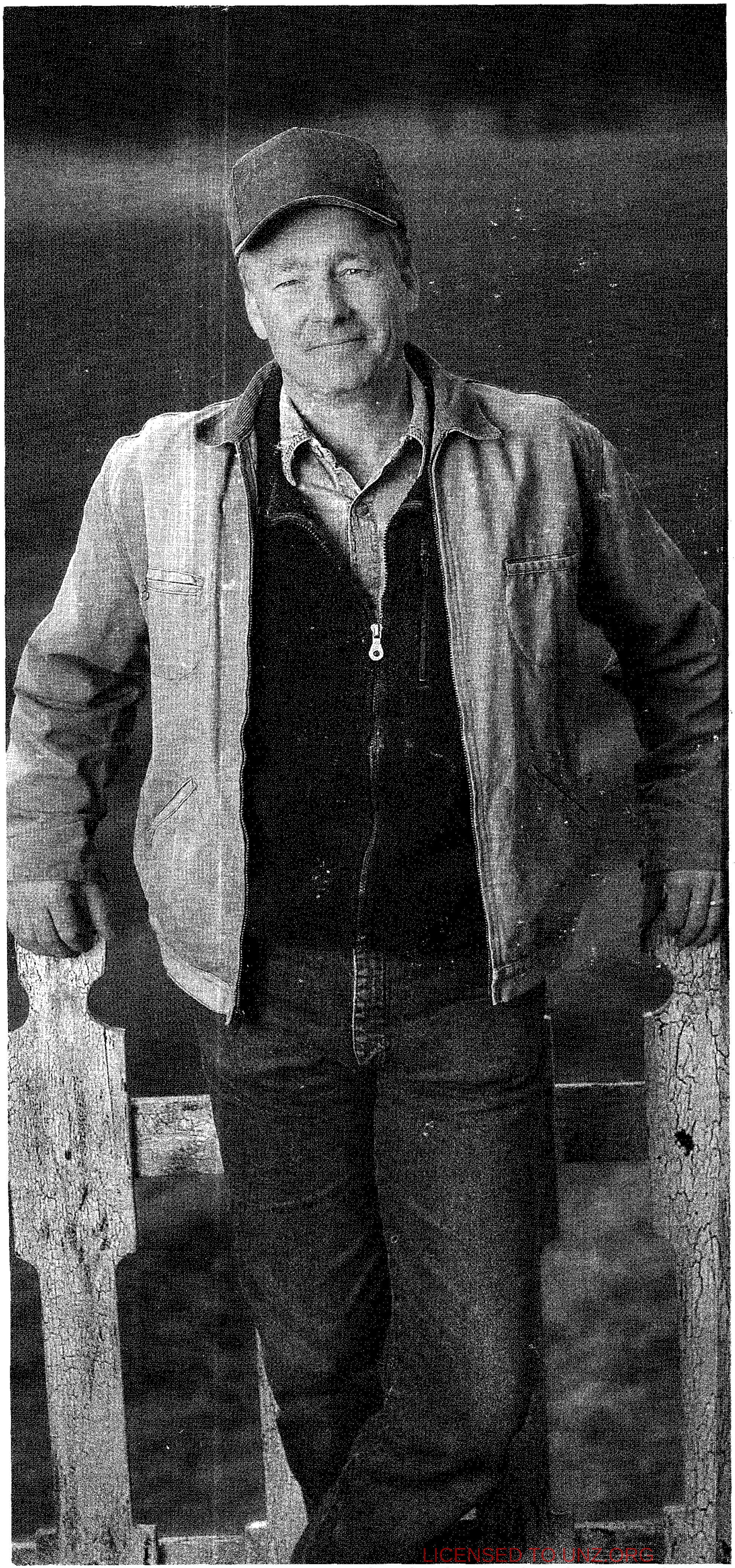

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